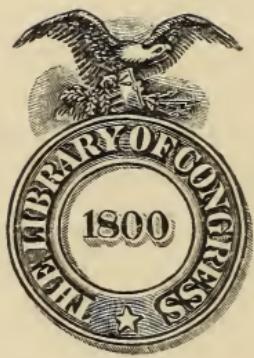


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Caleb Cobweb's Comparisons

Amos R. Wells

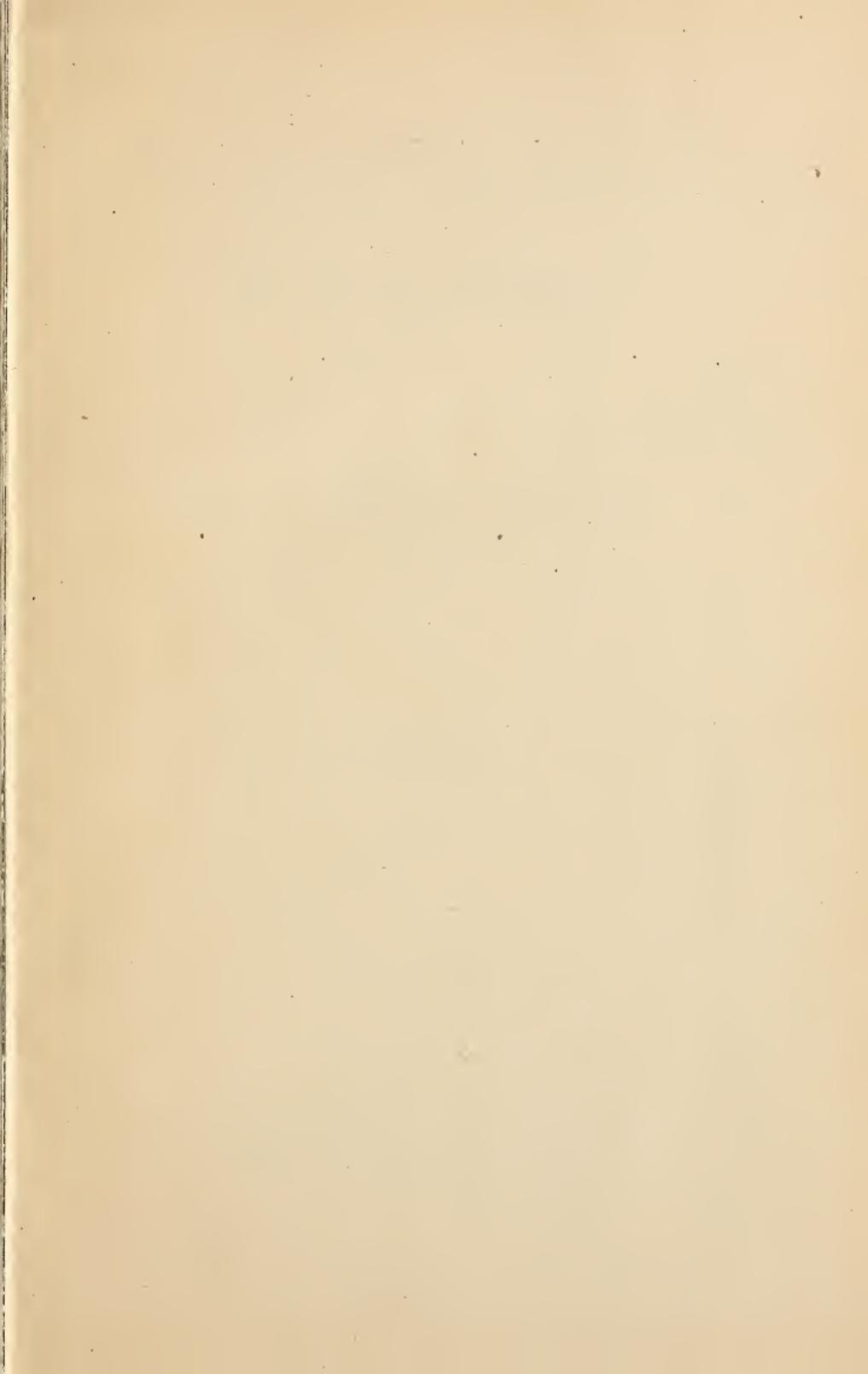


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Caleb Cobweb's Comparisons.

A Book of Modern Parables.

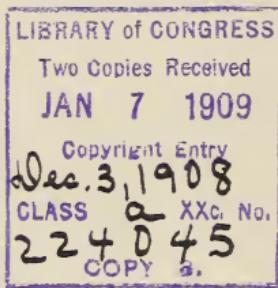
By

Amos R. Wells.

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Who Is “Caleb Cobweb”?

“PROFESSOR CALEB COBWEB, M. A.,” is an imaginary old gentleman, who for years has conducted “The Telephone Exchange,” a question-and-answer department in the paper of which I am an editor, **THE CHRISTIAN ENDEAVOR WORLD**. It is the Professor’s amiable custom to indulge in a few preliminary observations on any subject uppermost in his mind before he opens his weekly budget of queries and replies. He is very fond of drawing analogies between things material and things spiritual, and about seventy of these parabolic discourses make up this little volume.

AMOS R. WELLS.

Auburndale, Massachusetts.

November 11, 1908.

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CALEB COBWEB'S COMPARISONS.

STICKING OUT.

A QUEER accident it was, but it happened.

In a town near where I am now writing, a freight-car with a broken door was moving rapidly past an express passenger-train going in the other direction. The lurching of the freight threw the swaying door sharply against the side of the passenger-train, and with a swift jerk it was torn from its fastenings, and swung wildly out. It smashed a window of a well-filled coach, and then it took three others in its crashing course, till it was torn completely off.

The tearing noise and the flying glass frightened the occupants of the car. Several women fainted. One woman was taken to the hospital when the train reached Boston. There were some narrow escapes from serious injury. And all because a freight-car door was loose on its hinges.

Ah, my brethren, how many times this strange and most unusual accident is duplicated in the hidden affairs of the soul!

For our lives are like express-trains, swiftly moving hither and yon, on tracks that cross in many intricate ways. It is a wise Signalman, up there in the Tower, that keeps us from colliding!

But sometimes, though we may not collide, our doors get off their hinges, and then look out for the flying glass! "A man of angles," we say, meaning that he sticks out in just this fashion. "Hard to get along with," we say, meaning that we can't move along our track without being struck by some projecting disagreeableness.

My brethren, the longer I live in this mixed-up world, the more convinced I am that a goodly part of the happiness of our mundane existence is due to those comfortable folks that quietly keep themselves largely to themselves, "living and letting live," as the saying goes. They may not push us along our way, but they *do* let us get smoothly by!

DRY FARMING.

EVERY American should be greatly interested in the wonderful advance of possibilities for the West owing to the discovery that much of the land heretofore thought to be arid can be farmed with great profit without irrigation. By "dry farming" the wheat belt has already been moved into eastern Colorado fairly to the foot of the Rockies, and where the line will stop no one can predict. These Colorado dry lands, that had been thought useless except for a little grazing, produced last year an average of twenty-five bushels of wheat to the acre, thus leading the entire country.

The steam plough is the chief factor in the miracle. It will plough, pack, harrow, and seed thirty or forty acres a day, at a cost, including seed, of less than two dollars an acre. The ploughing and seeding are one operation, so that there is no chance for the ground to lose what moisture is in it. Moreover, the modern farmer drives his weeder and harrow without compunction through his growing wheat, not minding if he does destroy some of the

stalks, knowing how necessary it is to preserve the moisture by breaking up the soil. It is believed that, if the land is thus cultivated, at least five hundred million acres of land west of the Missouri River, that have been considered arid and barren, may be transformed without irrigation into enormously productive wheat-fields.

I want to do this!

Not in Colorado, but right here in Massachusetts.

Not in soil, but in life.

For I have a notion that no heart is altogether hardened in sin.

And I have an idea that no fortune is altogether arid and barren.

And I believe that the right kind of farming will make even the worst spiritual desert blossom as the rose, and the most desolate lot bloom like the Garden of Eden.

There is a Master Farmer.

Mary, at the sepulchre, thought He was the gardener.

He *is* the Gardener, but His field, His garden, is the world.

I will go to school to Him.

A NEW FILAMENT.

FOR a long time it has been realized that the incandescent electric light might be greatly improved if a better substance could be found for the filament through which the electricity passes. At first platinum was used, but that became exceedingly expensive, and carbon took its place. It is of carbon that the present films are made, and its resistance to the passage of the current causes the light we see.

Now two wise men of Columbia University, Professor Parker and Mr. Walter G. Clark, after long and patient researches extending over seven years, have hit upon a common substance which, when used as a filament in the incandescent lamp, gives a light far more brilliant than the carbon film will give. It produces the same amount of light with only one-third of the power, and it will last two or three times as long. It will add much to the comfort of life.

When I heard of this new triumph of science, I began to think about the way in which the Light of the World gets Him-

self manifested to the world. It can only be through the filaments of our poor human lives. And what wretched material we sometimes furnish Him, to be sure! What a miserable, red, dull, and flickering light He is able to make through us!

The current is here; there is no question of that. All the dynamos of the universe are at our service. There is power for the most dazzling illumination, if we will only furnish the conduit.

"The Light of the World"! Why, the world has, as yet, no idea what that is. Just as, in the days of the tallow candle, they had no conception of the brilliancy of our present illuminations, and as we, no doubt, would be equally astonished if we could have a glimpse of the glittering homes of the year 2000 A. D., so the world is still in the dark as to what Christ could do through fully consecrated churches and nations.

Wanted, New Filaments! Who will meet the demand? Who will make a beginning in his own life? Who will let his light so shine that men may glorify his Father in heaven?

SURPRISE TESTS.

WHEN a railroad sets down its iron foot, affairs generally go according to its desires. Not the most elaborate system of "block signals" will provide safety for passengers unless the signals are obeyed; but when the railroad officials make up their minds to have them obeyed, they *are*.

These remarks are illustrated by the recently published results of some tests which the Chicago and Northwestern Railroad made during the past year. These were surprise tests; that is, no one but the managers knew that a test of efficiency and obedience was being made at any time. And the number of the tests was 1,625.

Every test was successful. Every signal was obeyed. Not a red light was disregarded. Not a signal was misunderstood. Not an order but was carried out. The grade was 100 per cent.

And the reason?

Severity in some tests that had preceded. Carelessness was discovered by those surprise tests, and the careless engineers were

promptly taken to task. "It is not your fault," they were told, "that a terrible accident has not occurred in each case of negligence. If the conditions had actually been what the signals indicated, no power could have prevented fearful disasters." Ten engineers were dismissed. It was made perfectly plain that failure to observe signals and obey them meant the loss of situations. And that is why those 1,625 surprise tests did not in a single instance catch the engineers napping. The matter had been brought home to them.

And now, beloved, our lives are one long series of surprise tests. The signals of warning are set, red and glaring, right along our way. Shall we run by them? Ah, through carelessness or blear-eyed stupidity, how often we do run by them!

Well for us if the great General Manager of life's railroad takes us in hand. Well for us if He metes out any penalty, however severe. Let Him "lay us off," on sick-beds, perhaps, or with our hands fettered by poverty. It is far better—*anything* is far better—than the horrid crash at midnight, the burst of steam, the blaze of flame, the groans of death, and the ruin and shame that never end.

That never end; for, unlike every other road on earth, this railroad of life has no "terminal."

A TRACHOMA PARABLE.

MIRIAM ZARTARIAN is a pleasant-faced, attractive young Armenian girl, who was kept in the detention-pen of the Boston Immigration Station for nearly two years. What was the cause of this long imprisonment? That disease of the eyes, trachoma, which is so properly dreaded in this country that those afflicted with it are not permitted to land. Miriam was a victim of the disease, but she could not be sent back to Turkey because her parents lived in Boston, and she was coming over to them.

Well, for two years Uncle Sam has been a foster father to this Armenian girl, and you may be sure she has had the best of care. She came to love the immigration officials and the attendants at the station, and they came to love her. At last it was thought that her eyes were cured. A medical board of special inquiry was constituted by the Washington authorities. The newspapers aroused public interest in her case, and the verdict was eagerly awaited. At last a telegram was received bearing the good news from Secretary Straus. The

Armenian captive was free, and all Boston rejoiced.

Now I see in this incident a striking illustration of the conditions that bar souls from heaven. There is only one prohibition, only one thing that cannot enter there,—the terrible disease of sin.

No one charges the government of the United States with tyranny because it forbids the coming of trachoma. The law is reasonable and necessary. The people would insist upon such a law if there were none. It is even more reasonable and necessary that sin should be shut out of heaven. Sin is a disease far worse than trachoma. It is more contagious. It is more hurtful. Heaven would not be heaven if it were admitted.

And, just as all Boston was glad when Miriam Zartarian's eyes grew better so that she could come in, so there is joy among the angels of God when one sinner repents, and enters into the blessed citizenship of heaven. Whether admitted or excluded, it is all of righteousness and it is all of love.

LIGHT ALL THE JETS!

I HAVE in my study a gas stove with seven or eight burners, these burners being merely holes in a horizontal gas pipe. When I let on the gas, turning the "spreader" over the pipe, and then light one end, the flame flies from one jet to the next, till in a flash they are all lighted.

All, that is, but the last one. Sometimes that does not catch the flame at once, and I must wait a minute until it does, before turning down the "spreader."

Once, in my hurry, I did not do this, but hastened to my desk, not noticing that the last hole in the pipe was still dark. I went to work, and was soon absorbed in my task. It was winter, and the windows were shut; also, the door.

In about half an hour some good angel—I believe in angels, and that they do not stay up in heaven all the time—aroused me to what was going on. It was not an instant too soon, for I was nearly asphyxiated. I staggered to the stove and turned off the gas; to the door, and opened it; to the window, and pulled it down. It was a long time before my head was steady again.

The episode taught me a lesson, you may be sure. Several lessons, one of them being to be in less of a hurry. But chiefly, to light all the jets.

Yes, and all the jets in my life as well as in my house. For whatever energy is given me, to heat and light withal, becomes poison if it is allowed to escape dark and cold. Turn it to some good purpose! Your conviction, my soul! Your zeal, your holy ambition, your prayers! They are not given thee merely to escape into thin air. Thus escaping, they will fill that air with death. Put them to service! Apply the match of decision! Light every jet!

HOW TO LAY A GHOST.

SCOTLAND possesses many a haunted house and many a ghost-inhabited apartment. A story is told of a guest who arrived at one of these spectre-favored abodes so late at night that he was placed in the only room that was ready, the haunted chamber.

He pooh-poohed the story of a ghost, and gladly took the accommodations offered him; but when he put out his light, his courage went out with it. Oo-oo-oo! Anything was possible in that blackness. He rose, found his revolver, and put it under his pillow. Ghosts may not mind bullets, but the feel of the handle was comforting. So he fell into uneasy slumber.

At midnight he awoke. Perhaps a ray of moonlight fell across his eyes. Perhaps it was the solemn strokes of the clock, proclaiming the hour. At any rate—horrors!—he beheld a great, fat, white HAND at the end of his bed.

He lay paralyzed with terror. At last, he reached tremblingly under his pillow, pulled out the pistol, clinched his teeth, and fired at the ghostly hand. Then he

gave a howl that woke the household. He had shot off two of his own toes.

Believe the story or not,—*I* believe it,—yet you may learn from it a useful fact or two about ghosts. They are always a bed's length away. And the covers are always short. If you want to demonstrate their reality,—*Fire!*

In other words, the various spectres that a-fright our souls, the hob-goblin fears and worries and dreads that are the nightmares of our lives, originate with ourselves; they *are* our selves. Keep in touch with yourself, learn to recognize yourself to the farthest toe-reach of your fancy, and you will laugh all the spooks off the premises. And if you don't,—then hobble around as best you can on the few toes you will have left!

THE SHAH'S TELEPHONE.

PERSIA is not a country to which one would naturally look for improved modes of government, and for advanced applications of modern inventions; but certainly both of those discoveries are to be made in a little piece of news that has just come from Teheran by way of a leading London newspaper. The paper's correspondent telegraphs that the subjects of the new Shah have complained of the difficulty of bringing their complaints, according to the free-and-easy custom of the Orient, directly to the attention of his majesty. There are too many court officers, it seems, and they stand officiously in the way.

Well, what has the Shah done? He has actually caused a telephone to be set up in a public square in his capital, and he has invited his subjects to use it as a means of getting into direct communication with himself. By this ingenious contrivance he combines aristocratic seclusion with a democracy surpassing an American President's; and, moreover, he is safe from the dagger of the most enterprising as-

sassin. We commend the idea to the Czar of All the Russias.

But aside from the political reflections that arise, what a superb illustration is all this of the religious fact of prayer! There are many officious personages that try to get in our way when we would approach the King of Kings. "You must pass in your message through us," say priest and Pope, and all that harbor their spirit. "You must use the regular service of the post-office, with a postage-stamp of the right design and color," says the legalist. "You must wear such a dress, and use precisely such ceremonies," says the formalist.

But the King waves them all aside. In the market-place, in the shop, in the fields, at the church door, in the cheapest pew, in the lonely sick-room or the crowded streets He has set up His telephone booths. There is no exchange: the wire is direct. It rises straight to the council chamber of the Most High. It is attached to the Throne of the universe. And every word you whisper is heard by the King Himself, who, hearing, makes reply.

RATSKIN LIVES.

A GLOVE-MANUFACTURER was showing a customer a handsome pair of brown gloves. They looked fine and soft and valuable, but the customer was bidden to examine them more carefully. Then he saw that they were covered with many little scars and scratches, which were quite certain to weaken the skin, and which rendered the gloves of very little value.

The gloves, it was explained, were made of ratskin; and ratskin was always affected in that way, because rats fight so much. Their much-scarred skin is therefore of little use for glove-making, though otherwise it might be quite valuable.

The point of comparison is not far to seek. Doubtless you know, as I certainly do, some of those pugnacious men and women whose minds and souls are scarred all over with the marks of innumerable combats. They have gone through life with big chips on both shoulders. When no one else would knock them off, they have done it themselves. Debates have

dislocated their days and quarrels have torn their lives asunder. They have no friendship that is not rent in gaping spots, and ever-new disputes keep the old scars open and add fresh ones.

Nothing fine or even useful can be made from such lives. They are merely tolerated. The necessary attitude of the world toward them is one of pity, indifference, or sad repulse. And thus arise still other scars.

Oh, how they need that "preparation of the gospel of peace," wherewith not only their feet may be shod, but their hands, and their entire being!

THE LIFE OF A TIRE.

AN automobile tire is "calculated" to run 3,500 miles before it is useless, and the manufacturer will guarantee it for that run. As a matter of fact, very few drivers get 3,500 miles out of a tire. Some will get 4,000 miles; most, hardly 2,000.

The tire is injured by light, heat, and oil. Of course, a piece of broken glass is its deadly foe. But of all its enemies the worst is a careless driver.

If the driver takes curves at the top speed, and makes sudden twists in his course, and applies the brakes peremptorily without slackening motion, thus making the tires grind and slide along instead of rolling as they should, he will not get half so long service from those expensive tubes as a more considerate driver. As an illustration of this the case is given of a race in which two drivers took machines of the same type at the same speed over the same course, and while one wore out thirteen castings in the operation, the more careful man wore out only two.

Now it is just the same with our human machines.

Why is it that one man is strong and chipper at seventy while another is a groaning old man at fifty? Inherited maladies account for part of the difference, of course, but most of it is due to the men themselves.

One of them knew how to drive his life-machine, and the other did not; or, if he did, he disregarded his knowledge. One went prudently through life, kept up a steady gait, allowed himself no excesses, took no sudden starts, no abrupt turns, and never had occasion to put the brakes down hard. The other had gone slamming through life, scorching as he pleased, throwing his machine recklessly from side to side, and alternating insane spurts of speed with expensive though sadly necessary appliance of the brakes.

"Threescore years and ten"—for that long, at least, these life-machines of ours should run, smoothly, vigorously, enjoyably. In most cases, if they must go to the repair-shop or the junk-shop much before that, it is because some one has sinned.

FOLLOW THE STEEL!

Do you know what "following the steel" is? This is the meaning.

In putting up one of our immense modern office buildings, the first task, of course, and generally the most difficult and long-drawn-out task, is to make a good foundation. After this the steel framework of the structure is erected. As it is swung into place, great piece after piece, the riveters follow fast, and bind all parts firmly together. Up goes the big skeleton, story after story, till it towers in the air as high as Bunker Hill MonumeLT, to adopt a Bostonian superlative.

But as fast as the steel rises, the fire-proof tiling may be laid, and the brick or stone may be built up to fill the sides of the monster cube and shut in from the world its scores of compartments. That is "following the steel," when tile-workers and bricklayers and stone-masons keep close on the heels of the steel-men, and rise into the clouds only a little behind them. And nowadays a twenty-five-story building can be erected in three months.

Well, that would seem to be enough, but

I am not satisfied to stop there. I would have men "follow the steel," not only in literal building, but in that even more substantial building we call life.

For the framework of our life is supplied us. It is the circumstances in which we are set, our friends, our fortune, our opportunities, and our powers. It is put together by unseen workmen, piece after piece rising rapidly before us. Every day new tasks. Every hour fresh powers. At every turn some opening opportunity.

Follow the steel!

Follow it closely, not letting yourself fall a day behind. A day behind is a yawning gulf, almost impossible to fill.

Follow it blithely, a light in your eye, a song on your lips, good cheer in your heart.

Follow it with your best, and all of your best. Build in the material laid ready to your hand. Build it fair and firm. Build it straight and true. Build it so that it will stand inspection.

And so follow that when at last, the steel all up, you are ready to "bring forth the top-stone with shoutings," you may receive and deserve the applauding cry, "Grace, grace unto it!"

FLOATING MINES.

Do you remember the anxious time that ships' captains had—those, I mean, that were bound for China, Japan, Korea, or anywhere near—just after the Japan-Russia war? For floating mines had been strewn along those coasts with a liberal hand, and it was known that some of them—no one knew how many—had broken their moorings and were ranging the seas, portents of death for the ill-fated vessels that came in their way. It is a wonder that more great ships have not been thus destroyed by accidental contact with stray mines. Doubtless before another war (God grant there never may be another war!) some international arrangement will restrict or abolish this peril.

But there is another kind of floating mine that cannot be abolished so easily. Very likely you have struck many of the mines I mean in your own sailing along the ocean of life.

You will be talking innocently and gayly in a mixed assembly when suddenly a change will come over the company. Faces will look horrified. Others will look amused. Others will look sorry or angry

or perplexed. All brightness has left the scene. And the transformation was instantaneous.

What have you done? You have struck a loose, floating mine.

In other words, you have hurt some one's feelings. You have stumbled upon the theme of a neighborhood quarrel, perhaps. Or, you have offended some one who is notoriously over-sensitive or prejudiced on some point. Altogether unconsciously, you have "put your foot in it." And the "it" is something that should never have been in the way of your foot, or any foot.

Brethren, let us ignore these floating mines of the ocean of life. You can't ignore the Japanese kind, but these are destroyed only by disregarding them. Do not be easily offended yourself, and do not pay much attention to the supersensitiveness of others. Let a cheerful good sense free the high seas of conversation from these explosive and mischievous traps.

THE COST OF A LINE.

IN the famous little town of Plymouth, Mass., they are having trouble as I write. They have been voting on the question of license or no-license, as every Massachusetts town must vote, once a year; and a grand good custom it is, too.

But this year the balloting must be done over again. This is because 638 ballots were cast in the affirmative, 637 in the negative, and 36 were blank. That was so close that a more careful scrutiny was made, and it was discovered that one man had marked his ballot at that place with a mere diagonal, instead of the cross which he had properly used elsewhere in the ballot. This ballot was thrown out by the Supreme Court of the State, and as it was an affirmative, the vote was thus reduced to a tie, and the work must all be done over again.

Here are 1311 men that must vote over again. It will take them, on an average, at least half an hour each to do it. That will use up 82 eight-hour days, or more than a quarter of a year of working time. If the time of the average citizen of Ply-

mouth is worth, as it certainly is, two dollars a day, the cost will be \$164 for that item alone, while the election expenses proper will certainly increase the sum to \$300.

And all this waste of time and strength and money just because one careless fellow did not put another diagonal on his cross!

The moral sticks out so far that there is no need of pushing it farther. If I could choose my ways of becoming wealthy, I should simply choose to have the riches that are wasted all the time by people's heedlessness in trifles. I should be a trillionaire at the very least.

BASEMENTS.

BEFORE me lies a very interesting picture. It is printed on an envelope used by the famous Chicago firm, Marshall Field and Company, in delivering their goods. It shows a transverse section of their great new buildings, *from the street floor downward*.

First comes the street, with crowds of men, horses, carts, carriages, automobiles. Below that is the basement salesroom. Below that is the second-basement shipping-room. Still below that, on a level with the freight subway, is what is called the subway floor, with machinery, and much besides. Below that are the solid concrete caissons, enormous pillars that stretch down through layers of clay, gravel, and sand, till they reach the firm rock *one hundred and ten feet below the street level*. Certainly, interesting as is the aërial portion of a modern department-store, the subterranean sections are even more fascinating.

I have been moved by this picture to ask myself and you a very searching question: What is below the street level of our lives?

There, the show windows may be crowded with handsome goods, the aisles may be thronged with purchasers, the elevators may whisk their thousands daily up to six or seven or ten stories full of valuable and useful wares. But what is below the sidewalk?

For a life, as well as a store, cannot long flourish without basements. What we do before men must be carefully prepared out of sight of men, or it will not be effective. We must study and think more than we speak. We must be more than we seem. The caissons of our character must go down to the bed-rock of principle. The coal-bunkers must be full, the furnace must be powerful, the elevator machinery must be reliable. However much we may sell, our business will fail if the shipping-department does not get it to the purchasers. Oh, there is much that is of fundamental importance going on in the basement of a well-ordered life !

There *are* lives that begin with the street floor ; and when they become bankrupt, the reason is not far to seek.

PLATINUM COUNTERFEITS.

NOT long ago an English photographer deposited in his bank, among other pieces of money, a much-worn sovereign. He was amazed to find afterwards that he had been credited with a guinea. In reality, the coin was a counterfeit; but the base was of platinum, heavily gilded. Now though platinum, at the time when the counterfeit was probably made, was worth about one-third as much as gold, it is now more valuable than the yellow metal. This is because so little of it is mined, and there is so great use for it in the arts and industries.

It is quite unusual, as will be agreed, to find a counterfeit that is more valuable than it pretends to be; but in the domain of the spirit this discovery may be made all the time. Indeed, spiritual counterfeits are always of the platinum variety.

What I mean is this: that in spiritual counterfeiting the counterfeiter gives away quite priceless possessions, for which he never gets an adequate return. He may be counterfeiting piety, or virtue, or love, or honesty, or industry. Into every coun-

terfeit he puts his honor, his happiness, his self-respect, his hope, his character, and his eternal welfare !

A valuable coin, that ! No need of gilding it, surely ! The only difference between it and the platinum sovereign is that its metal is of use to no one but the counterfeiter. But to him, ah, how priceless ! And how endlessly foolish is this counterfeiting in the realm of spiritual realities !

WHEN "SPRINKLERS" DO NOT SPRINKLE.

"AUTOMATIC" sprinklers" are not always automatic. No human contrivance can be trusted to take care of itself. The most that can be said of the best of them is that they will bear watching.

The automatic sprinkler is, as is commonly known, a series of plugs in a series of water-pipes running along the ceilings of the "protected" establishment. These plugs are made of a metal easily melted by a slight heat. When they melt, streams of water deluge all below, and put out the fire.

That is, if the water is in the pipes! But within a few weeks, the fires in buildings thus "protected" have caused a loss of more than a million dollars, together with the loss of a number of lives.

In one case there was a slight leak in a sprinkler, which had led to the shutting off of the water-supply till it could be mended; then came the fire. In another case, there was a small fire, and the water was shut off until new plugs could be inserted; then came a big fire. And in still

another case the water had been shut off from the pipes, and no one knew why.

Ceaseless vigilance is the price of many things besides liberty. It is the price of safety, the price of prosperity, the price of purity, the price of wisdom, the price of power. Nothing can be left to run itself. Everywhere we need the track-walker, and nowhere more than along the rails of human life. Everywhere we need inspectors and watchmen, and nowhere more than in the complicated and dangerous business of living. Down through the centuries ring the needed words, never more needed than now: "Watch! Watch! for ye know not the day, nor the hour!"

TRAGIC FUN.

THE newspapers have reported, with all its grawsome details, an occurrence which, horrible as it is, I shall relate, briefly, for the sake of the lesson which it so forcibly teaches.

A laborer, John Douidi, was asleep, at 4.30 A. M., in front of a furnace in a Pittsburg steel-foundry. A craneman spied him, and at once was seized by the thought of a huge joke. He told several other workmen of his plan, and with many chuckles they obtained a five-gallon can of benzine.

Mounting the travelling crane and moving along till he was directly over the sleeper, the brilliant joker poured the benzine upon him. Part of it splashed into the furnace, and in an instant Douidi was swathed in flames, which burned his body to a crisp and killed him immediately. The joker, as I write, is fleeing from the officers of the law.

I do not tell this story to shock you, though it is one whose horrors do not soon fade from the memory. I tell it that you may see in it the type of a certain very common kind of fun.

It is the fun that is wholly absorbed in itself, and takes no thought for consequences. It points a pistol at a timid person, and "did not know that it was loaded." It pulls chairs from under those who are about to sit down. In college initiations it brands boys and girls for life with fire and acids. It trips folks up with stretched wires. It enters into realms that are even more perilous, and purely for "the fun of it" lets loose sly innuendos and sentences of double meaning that blast one's reputation like the breath of a fiery furnace.

"I didn't mean any harm. I didn't think." Thus the fool excuses himself to himself. Not thus, however, do other men excuse him; not thus is he excused by the Judge of all. For thoughtless mischief springs from thoughtless living, that supremely selfish form of life which is reckless of results if only it has its petty way. And such selfishness is a deadly sin.

DEADLY DUST.

A LONDONER once made an estimate—it seemed to be made with care—and concluded that if the flying of dust in London streets could be prevented, or even measurably reduced, a million cases of sickness would be saved to the community every year, and ten thousand deaths, that would otherwise occur, would not occur. Estimated in money, that would be a saving, he reckoned, of at least fifty million dollars.

Now without debating those figures, I think we shall all agree—all, at least, who know anything about modern discoveries of disease germs and their prevalence in dust—that the almost constant assaults of this dust upon city people is one of the most serious menaces to life in our modern days. Consumptives, and those suffering from other diseases, expectorate in the street, and the following day the dried effluvia are borne on the lightest breeze into fifty lungs. Post-mortem examinations, conducted on a large scale in many cities, make it certain that few inhabitants of cities but have had tuberculosis at some time, though most of them have been un-

conscious of it, and have had vitality enough to expel the dangerous intruders, and heal the wounds they have made.

But with the demolition of old buildings, the shaking of rugs, the crowding of cars and of public halls, and many other common operations of our cities, the unsanitary processes go merrily on. Until we wage war with dust and its allies, our campaign against the great white plague will be a succession of defeats.

But, important as all this is, I am not saying it primarily with a physiological or hygienic purpose. Other dust may be raised, as deadly as any that may be laid by a watering-cart; and the dust I mean cannot be laid by a watering-cart.

I mean the dust of spiritual friction, the dust of debate, the dust of unkind criticism, the dust of stinging sarcasm, the dust of malicious slander or thoughtless gossip. It all swarms with poisonous microbes. Rather than live in such dust, I would breathe my lungs full of air from a pest-house. It would be better for my bodily health, and far more comfortable to my soul.

(There are those who are continually kicking up this dust. Avoid them as you would the plague.

And oh, live dustless lives yourselves! Move gently. Speak not raspingly. Judge not harshly. Pour oil on the dust that

others raise. Live such a life, beloved, and we shall seek your presence as men go with parched and gasping lungs out of a fevered city, to breathe the pure and vivifying air of a mountain-top.

ILLUSTRATING VALUES.

NOT long ago this happened in Paris.

Some of you have seen those fascinating stalls of second-hand books that line the quays along the Seine. They stretch out interminably, boxes and counters crowded with old books of all sorts. At night, the lids are lowered over them and padlocked, and the queer bookstores are closed.

One of the proprietors of these literary establishments had bought at auction a little book of 230 pages. It was the "Complete Works" of Jean Devaines, an old-time member of the French Academy. He had paid one franc for the book, and he offered it at five francs. No one wanted it. Then four francs. Not a nibble. Then the price descended to three francs. Still apathy on the part of the public. Then two francs fifty centimes—half a dollar. And still the "Oeuvres Complètes" was unappreciated.

But just then some one read at the Institute a paper on this Jean Devaines, bringing out the facts that only fourteen copies of his Complete Works were ever printed, and only four of these were known to exist.

Presto! The price of that little book on the quay went up to \$50, and a buyer was found, at that price, in half a jiffy!

Oh, what nonsense is all this! The writings of Jean Devaines were no wiser, not a whit, the day after that paper was read at the Institute than they were the day before. The book was no more valuable, taking value in its strict sense. It was *worth* no more. People were ready to pay more for it, that was all.

Let us not be caught in any such folly. The rarity of an estimable thing may properly add to its value, but nothing is more valuable just because it is rare. A rare engraving, or book, or rug may be a good investment, just because of its rarity; but if the picture and rug are not beautiful or the book wise and entertaining, then in buying it you are not buying art or literature; you are dealing in a commodity, precisely as a grocer buys sugar or molasses or dried beans.

SMOKELESS POWDER.

ONE of the notable inventions in the grim series that is supposed to be making war so terrible that it will be impossible is smokeless powder. The old-fashioned powder was in one way a merciful device. It raised a tremendous cloud, so that each set of combatants was speedily prevented from seeing the other set through a thick veil of its own making. A blessed halt was necessary ever and anon, till the wind bore the clouds away.

But smokeless powder prevented all that. It kept the air clear, so that our side (for instance), having located the enemy, could fire away at them quite indefinitely without obscuring their own vision. And the enemy would have no smoke whereby to discover our batteries.

Now, however, comes the discovery that the flash of smokeless powder may be discerned easily through red glass, while the other features of the landscape are dimmed thereby. The commanding officers have now merely to arm their field-glasses with red screens, and they can point out the sharpshooters before they have done much

damage. Thus are inventions balanced by inventions.

I am not much interested in the literal question of smokeless powder. Soon, I hope, our friends at The Hague will relegate all such matters to the dark ages of which they are the unworthy survivals. What I find of interest is the application of all this to the spiritual life.

For how often we think to use smokeless powder in our dealings with our fellow men ! We shoot out against our neighbors thoughts of envy, of covetousness, of malice, and we think that no one sees ; there is no smoke from that fire. We pass along a bit of gossip or a piece of slander ; but it is smokeless powder we are using, and we are safe. No one will discover us. The ball will speed on its deadly way. Happiness will be slain, fortunes will be battered down, reputations will be torn to pieces by a bursting shell. But no one will suspect us. No one will spy us out.

Ah, there is One to whose vision smokeless powder is as plainly marked as powder that comes out and declares itself openly ! There is a Captain on the field that knows all secrets, pierces all disguises, perceives all ambushes. There is no smokeless powder in the world of clear seeing where He dwells !

TYPHOID FACTORIES.

A QUEER case is reported in the newspapers from the Reception Hospital in New York City.

A woman was taken there, a cook, who had no typhoid fever, and had not had the disease for six years, but who had nevertheless communicated it, in all probability, during those six years, to about twenty-five persons. The fever had been observed to break out in every family of which she became a part, and microscopical examination showed that her system is full of the germs. She is indeed, what one of the doctors called her, a living "typhoid factory."

It is a puzzling case, for the authorities do not know what right they have to detain her. She is not sick, and she has done nothing wrong. They propose to detain her, just the same, until they get those typhoid fever germs out of her body; and society will uphold them in their assumption of authority.

But what are we to say of those persons that go up and down the world sowing quite unconsciously, and in a way innocently, the seeds of trouble that often is as bad as typhoid fever?

There are many varieties of these.

Some are critics by nature, continually seeing what is wrong, though it is only a fly-speck, and never seeing the good, though it is as big as a mountain.

Some are despondent by nature, always looking on the under side of clouds, and emitting clouds from their inner fog when the sky is perfectly clear.

Some are sceptical by nature, full of doubts about even the most commonly admitted truths, and never stopping to think who may be hurt by the expression of those doubts.

Some are misanthropical by nature, cynical, suspicious, sarcastic, ready to believe the worst about their fellows.

Some are irritable by nature, magnifying slights, and imagining them when there is nothing to magnify.

Some—but why go on? The number is large and the kinds are varied, and any one may lengthen the list from his own disagreeable experiences.

“By nature,” I have said. But indeed I am not so foolish and wicked as to charge all this against the God of nature. Whatever evil tendencies these men may have inherited, or however unkind may have been the circumstances surrounding them, not one of them is compelled to keep his nature as it is, scattering poisonous germs wherever he goes.

The doctors may be at a loss to get the typhoid germs out of that cook's body; but there is a Good Physician of the soul, and He is never at a loss. If your "nature" is full of these seeds of evil, go to Him, and He will cleanse your nature; nay, He will give you a new nature, pure and healthful and health-giving like His own.

THAT OTHER SHOE.

A CERTAIN traveller, arriving at a hotel, found it crowded; the landlord assured him that not a room was left.

But the traveller was persistent and desperate. He must find lodging. He urged the lateness of the night. He bullied the landlord. He threatened him. And at last he extorted from him the information that two of his rooms were empty.

These rooms, however, had been paid for by an excessively nervous invalid, who rented the rooms on both sides of his bedroom in order that he might not be disturbed by noises on either hand. After much persuasion, the landlord agreed to open one of these to the traveller, who on his part agreed to creep into bed in perfect stillness.

Scarcely breathing, our traveller entered the room and proceeded to disrobe with the greatest care. He was getting along well, and was congratulating himself on his enterprise, when unluckily he dropped a shoe. He remained motionless for a time; but, hearing no sound from the other side of the partition, he completed his undressing, got cautiously into bed, lay

awake for some time trying to compose his strained nerves, and at last was on the point of falling soundly asleep.

Just then came a thud. The invalid had jumped out of bed. Then came a furious pounding on the door connecting the two rooms, while the frantic shout was heard: "In heaven's name, do you want to drive me crazy? *When* are you going to drop that other shoe?"

This is a ridiculous story, bearing all the marks of truth. In spite of its funny aspects, however, it teaches a very shrewd lesson.

For how many times we work ourselves into a frenzied apprehension of some evil that is not on the way! There have been indications of it, very likely. One shoe has fallen. There must be another shoe, at least, we argue. And we lie there, every nerve tense, our ears alert, our heart beating fast. The time drags along. Oh, this fearful suspense! We cannot endure it. We shall go insane. We—oh, misery!

And all the time there is no other shoe to fall.

GETTING DOWN AGAIN.

HORSES are very much like people.

For instance, the employees on the third floor of a Boston paper-box factory were greatly astonished one day when a large horse, fully harnessed, walked into their room.

He had just been shod in the street below, and had taken it into his head to walk out, enter the neighboring establishment, and walk up two flights of stairs!

The problem was how to get the fourteen-hundred-pound beast down to the level again. He was far too large for the elevator.

At last the driver took him by the bridle, a rope was tied about his body, and twenty-five or thirty men held him back while he made a stumbling and precarious journey down the way he had come up.

On the same day, in a suburb of Boston, another horse created some amusement at a drinking-fountain. He had quenched his thirst, but was not quite content with that. He backed a little, and then managed to lift his front feet into the fountain, where he splashed them about with evident enjoy-

ment. Here also the problem was to get him down again; and though this was accomplished, it was not an easy matter.

At my home there is a cat, Topsy by name, who was a long time in learning the full trick of tree-climbing. He was very ambitious, and delighted in scampering *up* all the trees in the neighborhood. Moreover, he was very timid, and would often retreat into those trees to escape hostile dogs or cats. But, once up, he could not descend.

There he would remain, sometimes for hours, stretched out upon a limb, trembling, looking eagerly down upon the desired ground, and meowing pitifully. Baskets were lifted to him on long poles. He would put out his paw and test them. They were too shaky for *him*. Punches with the said pole would merely send him further up the tree. Usually there was nothing for it but to climb after him, and rescue him at the peril of his desperate claws.

And now let all over-ambitious animals take warning!

Yes, let me myself take warning.

For how many, many times I have sprung up into some tree of lofty endeavor, only to find myself "up a tree" in the slangy sense of the term! I have attempted more than I can carry out. My task is too much for my time, or my strength, or my wisdom. And I am at my

wits' ends to know how to climb down again.

For promising is so easy, undertaking is so alluring, but fulfilment is so very, very hard.

MAIMED BY LAZINESS.

ONE day a revolting sight was to be seen in the Ohio State penitentiary. It was a convict, standing on a box in the blacksmith shop where hundreds of visitors passed by him during the daylight hours: and on his back and also on his front was a sign which read:—

I CUT OFF MY FINGER
TO GET OUT OF WORK.

That is just what he had done, and his punishment was to stand there, thus labelled, until his finger healed. He spent about six weeks in that position, a scorn and abomination to all who saw him; for who does not despise laziness—in other people?

And yet, as I read of the affair, I thought to myself, "How closely similar to what I see around me all the time!"

For here is a young fellow, able-bodied, quick-witted, well-trained; and his family need the money he might earn. But

when his entrance on some gainful occupation is suggested, "Oh, I never could do that!" says he. "That needs a smarter man than I am. My ability, such as I have, does not lie in that line." So he cuts off his finger to get out of work.

Yes, and here in the church is a Christian of social poise, mental vigor, and business success. Some work needs to be done. It may be the chairmanship of a committee that is vacant, or the Sunday-school needs a superintendent, or a new deacon is to be elected. Then ensues a spasm of modesty. With one slash of the depreciatory hatchet, off comes a digit. "I never *could* do that! Why, it would be impossible! It's altogether out of my line!" He has cut off his finger to get out of work.

The world is full of that sort of folk. They stay home from meetings, lest they be nominated to some office. They hide their access of wealth, lest subscription-papers find them out. They refuse to cultivate their powers of noble action because they are too sluggish to act. They are like the cowards of Civil War times who blew off their thumbs that they might not be drafted. They are like the Buckeye convict who cut off his finger to get out of work.

Pah! how disgusting all this is—in other people!

WIRE-GLASS CHARACTERS.

Do you know what wire glass is? It may be seen in many of the new buildings, used in office windows, and especially in elevator shafts. In the panes of glass, as they are made, are embedded wire screens with very coarse mesh. These circles of wire are about an inch across. One can get accustomed to them so that they obstruct the view very slightly. Indeed, one hardly realizes that they are there.

And what is the advantage? The extraordinary toughness the wire imparts to the glass. Above all, the safety against fire. Insurance companies recognize the latter quality by cheerful reductions of the premiums upon buildings thus equipped.

When a swirl of fire strikes against ordinary glass, it cracks and falls out. Then the flames sweep through, and the entire building is soon gutted. But wire glass will hold back flame to the point of 1,700 degrees Fahrenheit, or even more. It will hold back flame until the wire itself is melted, and even then a stream of water

striking against it will solidify it instantly. The glass will crack, but it will not fall out. Thus it is that outside windows of wire glass may dispense with iron shutters. They are even better than iron shutters, for they are more certain to be closed at night.

Now that is the sort of character I should like to possess. Clear and transparent, letting the sunshine through, letting through the ideas and events of the great world outside, hospitable and sweet. Firm and tough, tenacious of my own notions, holding to my own designs, protective of my own possessions against the fiercest fire-storm of opposing elements. I want to combine these two seemingly unfriendly qualities. The wire glass shows me how they may be combined.

There is the open window, admitting everything, zephyrs and hurricanes, butterflies and bats, fragrance and fire-blasts. That is perilous.

There is the iron-shuttered window, safe and secluding, but dark, damp, dingy, and horribly gloomy.

Some lives have one of these and some the other. I will have both. I will live in the world, but not of the world. I will be all things to all men, but I will work out my own salvation. I will seek sweet-ness and light. I will also seek firmness

and strength. It is a new idea in a building. I suspect that I shall find it to have been a very old idea in the making of a soul.

THE VALUE OF ROTARIES.

THE old-fashioned way of getting rid of snow on railroads was by means of the primitive shovel. A storm would send every available man out on the road, and many were the backaches next day.

The second step was the early form of the snow-plough, a form still in use wherever the Frost King is not too fierce in his operations. It is a wedge-shaped plough, which is pushed against the snow by locomotives behind it, and sometimes as many as seven locomotives have been hitched in line for that purpose. But the engines are liable to get off the track, and the method is clumsy and inefficient compared with the rotary snow-plough, which is the latest contrivance.

This rotary plough may be twelve or more feet in diameter. It consists of a series of rapidly revolving knife-edged scoops, that bore their way through the snow and ice and send it from fifty to a hundred feet to one side and the other. This snow-screw is rotated by its own engine, and the whole affair is propelled by one or two engines behind. It may move

from two to twelve miles an hour, and it will conquer any snowbank that Boreas can heap together.

This evolution of the snow-plough contains a hint for all men that are obliged—as so many are—to force a way through opposing elements in the world.

You may push against them, ram them, propel yourself bluntly and headlong. You may get derailed. You may get a broken head. The obstructions will very likely be rammed out of the way, but it will be at great and unnecessary cost.

Try the rotary motion. Take the hindrances on the flank. A rifled cannon is a far more efficient weapon than a battering-ram. A billy-goat is not a good model for our following. Bluntness is never a virtue, and it is always expensive. There is a better way.

THE PRICE OF BRAINS.

A LETTER I once received from Springfield, Ohio, told me the following story.

While my correspondent was waiting for her change at the meat-shop a woman came up, and, after inspecting the various meats displayed, seriously asked the butcher, "How much do you ask for your brains?"

"As I came away," remarked my correspondent, "I amused myself with speculations on the possible outcome of such a tragedy as seemed impending."

But brains are sold, and bargains for brains are made, in many places besides Ohio meat-shops.

How much do you ask for your brains, young man?

Here is the saloon-keeper, who will pay you a few years of half-crazed revelry for them. Do you agree?

Here is Mammon, who will give you a bank-book for them, perhaps a book with seven figures in a row after a dollar sign. Is it a bargain?

Here is Ambition, who will give you a

seat in the legislature or in Congress. Make the exchange?

Here is Sloth, who offers a feather bed and a morris-chair. Take 'em?

You may question some of this. "It takes brains," you may say, "to get into office or to make money."

Yes, brains of a certain kind. But do you want to sell your brains for that sort of work,—money merely for money's sake, and power merely for power's sake, without considering the good you may do with the money or the power?

(Ah, but here comes the Maker of brains.

"How much do you ask for your brains?" He inquires. "I will give you wisdom (glorified brains), and joy, and honor, and friends, and eternal life."

Will you make the exchange? Is it a bargain?

There never was a better bargain in all the world.

BY CONTRAST.

THE broom-boy at the barber-shop wanted to clean a last-summer's straw hat belonging to one of the customers.

"No," said the customer; "it's as good as new."

Thereupon the broom-boy quietly hung up the debatable article between two straw hats of the present season. The contrast was astonishing. Grimy and yellow, the "good-as-new" straw hat cut a perfectly disgraceful figure.

The customer gave a glance at it, as he settled himself in the chair.

"Here," he said to the sagacious broom-boy, "I've changed my mind. You may take that hat, and give it a thorough cleaning. Hurry up, now."

Thereat the broom-boy chuckled, and a moral was afforded Caleb Cobweb.

For it is very easy to be satisfied with one's self, in any department of one's life. A man goes to pieces so gradually. Souls grow grimy so unnoticeably. We started out new. Day by day makes little difference,—*no* difference, that we can see.

But there is a difference, and a big one, unless we keep cleaned up. And if you want to know whether you need that cleansing or not, first set your life alongside the one pure Life, and then stand back and look at the two!

SELF-MENDING TIRES.

AN Australian has invented a substance that he calls "miraculum." His modesty was evidently on a vacation when he named the compound, and yet it certainly possesses wonderfully useful qualities. It is to be applied to pneumatic tires to remedy punctures, and this is the way it works:

It is a semi-liquid, looking like cream, and about as thick. It is pumped through the valve into the inner tube of the tire, and the revolution of the wheel throws it in a coat over the inner surface. When the tire is punctured it oozes out of the opening, solidifies as soon as it reaches the air, and behold! there is no opening. It has been tested, and is found to do what is claimed for it.

Now I want some miraculum in all the wheels of my life chariot! I want a good supply of it.

How constantly those tires get punctured! Unkind words, malicious sneers, hateful slanders, bitter ridicule, foolish misunderstandings, angry recriminations—all these are strewn along my road, and their edges are sharper than ever was

broken glass. Bang! go the tires nearly every time I ride out.

O yes. I patch them up and roll along after a fashion. My tires are covered with sticking-plaster of every hue. They look like veterans of a thousand battles.

But what I want is no exterior application, but an inner remedy like miraculum. I know the name of what I want. It is a shorter name, but it means far more. It is "love." Love! Ah, love! No life chariot will be troubled with punctured tires when love is used within. It heals every thrust, however cruel, and cures every wound, often before it is known to be a wound.

(For love suffereth long and is kind. Love thinketh no evil. Love is the miraculum of the soul.)

THE PROBLEM OF SMOKELESS POWDER.

SMOKELESS powder has revolutionized the art of gunnery. It has done this not only because of the absence of smoke, thus enabling the gunner to see his target clearly and constantly, but its enormous power has greatly increased the range of our guns and the accuracy with which they may be fired, and the effect of the impact when they hit the mark at which they are aimed.

But all of this has not come about without disadvantages. A modern man-of-war is about as dangerous to its occupants in time of peace as in the midst of a battle. More than one great war-ship during recent years has been blown up by the stupendous explosion of its powder magazine. The terrible accidents that have occurred in target practice in our own navy are familiar to all.

The fact is that this new agent of destruction, smokeless powder, is a chemical compound in a state of unstable equilibrium. Heat is certain to decompose it,

with the result of a disastrous explosion. But often when it is kept very cold the elements of which it is formed are liable to separate, with the same terrible result. It is possible to keep the magazines cold by means of refrigerator plants supplying air at a very low temperature, but this chemical decomposition has not yet been remedied, though very likely some day it will be.

What is wanted in all kinds of warfare is a powder that combines great energy with great stability.

In all kinds of warfare, I say; for in men, as in this tremendous but risky form of matter, those that possess great strength and force are only too often in a state of unstable equilibrium. They are liable to "go off" at wrong times, and when there is no enemy in sight. They do not "keep cool." Their impulsive, unexpected explosions scatter about them a mass of wreckage which, though it is spirit and not matter, is quite as ruinous as any that ever littered the decks of a war-ship.

Sometimes—for the secret has been found in men though not in things—sometimes we see great spiritual force united with great spiritual stability. And then we have a man to whom the world bows down.

TESTED SEED.

WHAT is a better illustration of the “vanity of vanities” than to plant seed which never comes up? You have bought it with good money. You have spent good time and strength in preparing the ground, and planting the seed, and tending it. And for return you have—the same bare ground with which you started. Nothing in all the range of human endeavor and failure is more disappointing.

Now I have been reading the advice of a certain professor of agriculture—advice which he gave primarily to the farmers of Iowa, but it will answer as well for any set of seed-sowers.

Success in farming, he declares, is very largely a matter of the wise choice of seeds. Test your seeds, he says, if you would have good crops.

For instance, corn. Take seed grown in the neighborhood, seed that is used to the conditions of soil and climate which it will have to meet. Choose well-formed and uniform ears. Take six kernels from each ear, three from each side—two from

the butt, two from the middle, and two from the tip. Then plant them and see whether they germinate. If they do not, throw away that ear. If they do, use it for your seed.

The professor says that choosing the seed thus carefully means an increased yield of thirty bushels to the acre. On a hundred-acre field, he says, the money gained would be from \$500 to \$2,000. The testing could be done in a month, and in the winter. If he is right, the farmer that does not follow his advice will deserve to journey "over the hills to the poorhouse."

And whether he is right or is exaggerating, he is absolutely correct when you apply the statement to the realm of the spirit. The teacher and preacher and writer and parent—all that have to do with the instruction of others—and who does not?—will double their yield if they are careful about their seed. Not the first topic that comes to mind, not the first book at hand, not the first advice that occurs to you, but thought and prayer lavished upon the choice of all that is to enter into the make-up of immortal souls.

Oh, it will pay—thirty-fold, sixty-fold, an hundred-fold!

THE USEFUL RUBBER STAMP.

GUTENBERG, or Faust, or whoever it was that invented the art of printing, would have accomplished wonders for the human race if he had gone no farther than the hand stamp, and the printing-press had never appeared. This primitive hand stamp is still in use in a multitude of ways. There is hardly an office of any kind in which it is not employed.

Watch the baggage-master making out the check for your trunk. In front of him is a wall full of hooks—scores and scores of them, and on every hook a rubber stamp. Swiftly and accurately he snatches down one after the other, slaps it on the ink-pad and then on the ticket, folds up the latter and hands it to you, having accomplished in a few seconds a large amount of work. Look at your check, and you will see stamped upon it not only the name of the town to which your trunk is to go, but also the road it is to take, *via* the B. G. and St. X., the L. M. R., the A. B. C. and D., the P. F. Short Line, and perhaps other

roads besides. To write all this out would have occupied that busy baggage-master several minutes. It would have doubled his day's work or required the doubling of the force of workers. And what is true of the baggage-room is true of almost every business office in the world. There are few time-savers and labor-savers like a rubber stamp.

Now what I want to learn is the use of the rubber-stamp principle in my life.

By the rubber-stamp principle I mean the power of doing automatically, or almost automatically, whatever can be done in that way.

Not everything, of course, can be so done. Often a very little can be done automatically. Most matters need the whole mind upon them, with all its faculties fully alert. But whatever can be done automatically is so much clear gain.

It is not laziness; it is economy. It is not a cheap way of doing things, but it is actually a better and more accurate way. The less you need to employ your brain in the non-essentials,—for instance, the letters forming the initials of those railroads marked on your trunk-check,—the more of your brain you have left to employ on the essentials.

Here is the great advantage of doing the same thing always in the same way. Dress

in the same way, and dressing becomes an automatic process. Take up your work, however varied its items, in the same order. If you are a housewife, sweep your rooms in the same order, handle utensils and ingredients in the same order, put your tools always in the same place—in short, whatever you have to do often, do it in a uniform way. Thus you will be forming—not ruts, for ruts are hindering grooves—but iron rails on which the wheels of your life will roll smoothly and swiftly to the goal you have in view.

There is enough in every life that must be written out with original and painstaking care. Whenever you can, use a rubber stamp.

AN EDIBLE GUIDE-ROPE.

WALTER WELLMAN was not able to start for the Pole this year, but he will do it next time—unless Peary gets ahead of him. Anyway, he contrived a balloon with many interesting points.

One of these ingenious features is the guide-rope. It is a rather formidable "rope," being six inches in diameter, and 130 feet long. It is made of the very best leather, covered with steel scales to protect it as it glides over the icy ground.

The peculiar thing about this 130-foot serpent is the material with which it is stuffed. It is filled with bacon, ships' biscuit, butter, ham, dried meats, desiccated vegetables—a great variety of the very best food for use in cold climates. The leather and steel of the whole snake weigh only 260 pounds, while the food stuffing weighs 1,150 pounds. This is, of course, nothing but an auxiliary food supply, and yet it may "come in quite handy" some time.

And that is the sort of contrivance I want for my life balloon! It needs ballast, of course. It needs something analo-

gous to the guide-rope. It cannot all be machinery and gas—an upward pull and a forward push, my religion and my labor. It must also have play—play to serve as a relief from work and keep the too-eager spirit from running away with itself, too far upward and too fast ahead. O yes, I must have some play.

But the play may be stuffed with food! It may be nutritious! It need not be mere empty sport. It may feed the mind and the soul. If it does not, it is no guide-rope for a ship that is bound for the Pole!

THIRTEEN YEARS IN WATER.

FRDERICK SCHLIMME was a stone-mason of Brunswick, Germany. In November, 1894, he fell from a tree, breaking his backbone and crushing his spinal cord. The lower half of his body was paralyzed, and the derangement of the internal organs was so great that some of them ceased to act. The only way in which the life of the unfortunate man could be preserved was by keeping him submerged in water at a temperature of ninety-four degrees Fahrenheit. His body was ingeniously supported, and thus surrounded by hot water Schlimme felt little or no pain.

For thirteen long years the patient has remained in this bath, and it was only recently that death released him from his watery imprisonment. But he has made the best use of those years. He soon became able to make baskets and articles of wire, and cages, and other things, which were so well made that they brought large prices and found a ready sale. Besides, he bred large numbers of canaries.

I know nothing about the character of

the man, but I suspect that he lived in the Bath of Contentment; or perhaps it would be better to call it the Bath of Cheerful Courage. And I am not sure but it would be worth any man's while to break his backbone for the sake of getting into that bath. But that is not at all necessary.

TOO MANY LIGHTS.

BOSTON Harbor saw a singular accident the other day. Nix's Mate is a small rocky island in the middle of the harbor. and one night the German steamer Brewster grounded upon it. The cause of the mishap was not manifest till the next day, when it was seen that a lantern placed near the island by dredgers had been mistaken for the regular gas buoy, marking the reef on which the vessel had stranded.

The pilot was completely exonerated by the owners of the vessel. His error was perfectly natural. The fault was the dredgers', who should not have placed a light so near that marking the reef, or, if they did, should have chosen a light of some distinctive color.

The incident was one of importance, since the repairs on the ship's bottom may cost \$15,000; but it is of value to me, because it has set me to thinking about the multiplying of signal lights along the way of life.

There are so many of these lights! I

wonder that the young pilots of these life-crafts which I see around me do not get more confused than they do. Perhaps it is because they pay so little heed to the signals!

But really, with oral advice and written, with the multiplicity of books and papers and addresses, all of us, old as well as young, have far more counsel, good and bad, than we can heed or digest. There is serious need of some discrimination. What shall we consider carefully, and what shall we neglect?

Fortunately, the answer is ready. Fortunately, there is one series of lights, well marked, distinct, easily read. It is the Bible series. Every step of the way is marked by them. They shine out brightly on the darkest night. They cannot be confused with any others. And whoever commits his life ship to them will never go astray.

ALL FROM A RAIL.

IT was certainly one of the most curious accidents in railway annals. I got down to Riverside station just too late to witness it. I found the station platform crowded with people, and all the tracks covered with puffing locomotives and waiting trains,—the main-line tracks both ways, and the circuit track,—ten in all. This is what I learned had happened.

Some Italians were carrying a heavy steel rail across the tracks just below the station, at a place where the circuit tracks branch off from the main-line tracks. There came bearing down upon them two trains going toward Boston. They were almost abreast. One was a passenger-train, and one, on another track, was a freight-train. The foreman, whose business it was to give the warning, did not see the trains, and the engineer of the passenger-train blew a warning whistle very sharply.

At once the Italians, and small blame to them, dropped their heavy burden, and scuttled to a place of safety. At once the passenger-engine ran into the steel rail,

which twisted up under the forward truck, threw it off the track, and it ploughed along for a thousand feet before its trucks were buried in the ground, and it came to a standstill. At once the other end of the rail, plunging around, caught the freight-engine, threw it also from the track, and it repeated the performance of engine number one.

There was a pretty situation! Three tracks were blocked, and the traffic in both directions was completely stalled. When I reached the place, Riverside had collected what was undoubtedly the largest assemblage of locomotives and trains of its entire history. As it promised to be, and really was, hours before the tracks could be cleared, I hunted up an accommodating electric-car, and made my slow way to my office.

While making the journey I had a chance to moralize on the mischief that is caused when a single man, in our complex modern civilization, ceases, for a single minute, to do his duty; but my meditations need not be repeated, for they have doubtless, by this time, occurred also to you.

A BACKWARD METER.

AN electrician in New York has been arrested on the charge of interfering with an electric meter. It is said that he has been making and selling a device which, attached to a meter, will cause it to run backward, and very little electricity is used in the operation. He found a ready sale for the contrivance, and the company has been swindled out of hundreds of thousands of dollars.

Well, that gentleman will doubtless get his deserts, and the company will be prepared against future enterprises of the sort. But there is a way of making meters run backward which cannot be reached by law, and yet it is far more meddlesome than any cellar stealing that was ever accomplished.

I refer to those miscreants who by their doubts, their sneers, their croakings, turn backward the indicator on the meter of progress, and make what is in reality a substantial gain look like a minus quantity.

You know the kind of man I mean. Nothing good can be done in the world but he immediately begins to discount it. "O

well," he snarls, "it won't last. "You wait a few years, and you will hear no more of it. It is only a flash in the pan."

And if it manages to survive his cheerful prediction and holds out for more than his few years, he takes another tack: "It is waning," he whines. "It is losing its former enthusiasm, its virility. It is on its last legs. Let it give way for something better, something adapted to present needs."

And then, if it inconsiderately refuses to give way, but obstinately remains on the stage of action, our kindly friend begins to call attention to the pride of too great success, the dangers of over-confidence, the aggressiveness of the powerful movement, or organization, or whatever it is. He raises a timely warning against it, and predicts that its pride will some day have a fall.

This index manipulator is a great fellow for statistics. The most prosperous set of figures ever drawn out of a printing-press will look, after he is through with it, like the balance-sheet of a bankrupt establishment after the expert accountant has gone over it. There is not enough left to start a new business in a tent.

Things are always going to the dogs, and our friend can always prove it. He can paint a cloud into any picture. He puffs out a fog that blots out any sun.

He is a thief, just like the people who used that electric attachment. The meter is all right. Our old world is rolling on as smoothly as ever, and every age is splendidly better than the age before it. Hands off the meter! No tampering with the index! And if any one tries the gloomy game, clap him into the dungeon of public execration!

FALSE SAPPHIRES AND TRUE DIAMONDS.

A CLEVELAND jeweller is reported as disclosing one of the tricks of would-be smart folk. He declares that many people of considerable wealth wear imitation stones. These are seldom diamonds, because it is comparatively easy to tell an artificial diamond. They are generally colored stones—rubies, or emeralds, or sapphires. These false stones are worn with a real diamond, and the true jewel carries off the deceit. The diamond is so plainly a genuine article that no one questions the genuineness of the gems that accompany it.

There! said I to myself when I heard of this; that accounts for the success of some people whom I know. They do not deserve to succeed, these people. They are cheats in many ways. They pretend to know what they do not know. They get credit for doing a lot of things that some one else does for them. They repeat the bright sayings of other folks as if they were original. They brag of possessions they do not possess, and hint of accomplishments that were never theirs. They

glance at a book and talk as if they had read it. They make a smattering of an art serve them for a thorough acquaintance with it. And yet the world seems to believe in them, and takes them at their own estimate of themselves.

Now I understand it. I will look into the matter, and I believe that I shall find in every one of them some genuine diamond accompanying all this falseness. While I have seen the artificial gems, probably the world has perceived the real one. This man may be kind, sincerely kind. Another, perhaps, is thoroughly honest. Another is always in a good humor. Each of these qualities is a splendid diamond. No wonder the world, perceiving it, lets the other stones pass without an investigation.

Of course the world is wrong; but I wonder if I, too, am not wrong a little!

BEING A BEE.

NO one could understand it. The cherry-trees were loaded with magnificent fruit, and they had not borne fruit for years past. Some of them had never borne fruit. It was just the same way with the apple-trees. They had been condemned to the axe, but the farmer had been too busy to cut them down. And now, as if they understood that they must do something to save their lives, here was this wonder of splendid fruit!

The secret was discovered at last. Indeed, it was very apparent—when it was discovered. It was bees.

A number of beehives had been introduced to the farm that year, and this was one of the results. The busy little insects had carried to the trees just the pollen that they needed to fructify them, and the fertilized blossoms had become a glorious harvest.

This is what is happening all the time in the world of men, as well as in the world of trees. The bees are those industrious folk that are not original them-

selves, but know how to prompt and feed originality in others. They carry intellectual pollen.

Sometimes it is a bright saying to which they give currency. Sometimes it is a witty anecdote which they pass around. Sometimes it is a noble book which they praise and lend and render popular. Sometimes it is a scientific discovery which they translate into untechnical language and bring into notice in newspaper articles or popular lectures.

These bees are invaluable in the home. How they make the dinner-table sparkle! What mines of information they are to the children, and of inspiration to the grown-ups!

These bees are useful in a church. They always have helpful quotations and suggestive anecdotes for the prayer meeting. They can tell the pastor and the Sunday-school superintendent about the very newest methods which they have picked up. Everywhere, indeed,—or, at least, wherever people are thinking and working,—these bees are grand assistants; just because of their lack of originality, just because they pass along the best of other people's thoughts and plans.

Oh, it is fine to be original; but sometimes I think that to be a transmitter of originality is finer still.

AN ELECTRIC SWITCH.

THE electric switches now in use on so many street-car lines must be a great convenience to the motormen and conductors—when they work; *provided* they do not work too well. I have just been reading of a case in which one of them worked too well.

It was in Brookline, Mass. The car went out over the point at which the electric switch is operated. It kept on full current, and therefore the switch was not thrown. Close behind it, however, came a car, which, passing over the operating point, turned off its current, which had the effect of throwing the switch and swinging the rail. The forward truck of the first car had passed the switch, but the rear truck had not. That truck, therefore, was thrown off on tracks that ran at a sharp angle to the tracks on which the front truck was running. The result was that the rear wheels jumped the track, there was a tremendous crash, and the whole set of tracks was blocked for three quarters of an hour, till the wrecking-car could set matters right.

This is a complicated world in which we live, friends. What a network of tracks, with all these myriads of lives running here and there, all these millions of aims, and plans, and ambitions cutting across one another in every direction! Every rod or so there are switches. Lives can pass very easily from one track to another. It is all free and easy. And the switches work at a touch.

The wonder is that more mishaps do not occur. The wonder is that life-cars do not oftener crash into each other, and that electric switches are not oftener turned under us.

And the lesson is: Go slowly! Remember that there are other cars on the same life-tracks. Look out for the next man as well as for yourself—for the man ahead of you; also for the man behind you. You will get to the terminus quite as soon for it. Perhaps you will get there sooner. That Brookline car gained a few seconds by its precipitancy—and it lost forty-five minutes.

VALUABLE SWORDS.

IT is said that the most valuable sword in the world belongs to the Gaekwar of Baroda. (Doubtless you know offhand what a Gaekwar is, and precisely where Baroda may be found.) This sword is worth \$1,125,000. Hilt and scabbard are of gold, but you cannot see the gold for the great diamonds and rubies and emeralds with which it is encrusted. It is an heirloom, and has passed from father to son for seven centuries.

Another valuable sword—though so much less valuable as not to be mentioned with the former—is one owned by the Shah of Persia. It is covered with eastern pearls, and it is worth \$50,000.

The Czar is the proud possessor of a sword worth \$75,000, covered with diamonds, and the Sultan of Turkey, when he wants to cut a particular dash, straps on a scimitar whose hilt alone is worth \$118,000.

It is said regretfully that the United States does not possess a sword worth more than \$3,000. Too bad!

And yet—how about George Washington's sword with which he carved out a new republic? How about Grant's sword

with which that republic was preserved a united nation? How about the sword of John Brown? And, to go to other lands, how about the sword of Chinese Gordon, the sword of Havelock, the sword of William of Orange?

This country—every country—possesses more than one sword whose value in the eyes of all sensible men is not to be estimated in money. Not all the diamonds and rubies and emeralds in the world are to be compared with it. Could the wealth of Great Britain buy from the United States the sword of Washington, or the wealth of the United States buy from Great Britain the sword of Wellington?

A diamond-encrusted sword is about the most absurd object in the world. It is self-contradictory. It proclaims its own uselessness. It is like the surface glitter of "society men." It is like the show of learning made by pedants. It is like the rhetoric of certain orators I have heard. It is like the Pharisee's prayers on the street corners. It is like the man in the Epistle of James who said, "Be ye warmed and fed," and let it go with the saying.

For the best beauty of the sword is the glitter of steel and the sharp edge—provided there is any need of a sword at all; and the best splendor of a man is that he do the work which God means him to do.

WEIGHT WHILE YOU WAIT.

THE Boston post-office is laughing over the experience of one of its examiners who has been testing candidates for clerkships in that big institution. One man who was examined weighed only 112 pounds. Now 125 pounds was at that time (I believe the rule has since been changed) the least that a post-office clerk might weigh. If a man weighed less than that, he was not considered strong enough for the work. According to custom, the candidate was given thirty days in which to increase his weight the necessary thirteen pounds.

Up he popped at the end of the month, and the scales showed that he now weighed 127½ pounds. That looked like a miracle. The examiner's suspicions were aroused. He viewed the applicant closely. He did not appear plump. He did not look like a man that was "heavy for his size." Under the circumstances, the man was told to take off his clothes.

This being done, lo! ten strips of lead were found bound about his manly form. Some of them were six inches long, some of them were two feet long. Altogether they weighed 15½ pounds. The miracle

was explained, and the candidate was dismissed.

When I read that story, I thought at once of the many short cuts to knowledge that so abound nowadays. "German in Six Weeks!" "Shorthand in Ten Easy Lessons!" "Three Months in our Business College and a Position is Assured!" "The Universal Sage, or, All Knowledge Condensed Into a Vest-Pocket Volume for Handy Reference!" That is the way some of the promises read.

Now it is good to realize that you cannot get weight "while you wait." Strips of lead are easily obtained and quickly attached, but they are not weight. The world has many examiners, keen of wit and shrewd of eye. One or another of them is sure to find you out. Then come confusion and disgrace.

It is useless to think of it; there is only one way to gain weight, and that is by proper eating, proper exercise, and proper sleep. And there is only one way to gain mental and spiritual weight, and that is by proper brain food and heart food, digested by thought and action. It is a slow process. It is carried on "while you wait," to be sure, but the wait is, oh, how long!

It pays, however. It is the open sesame to every position worth having in all the world.

ACRE CLUBS.

THE new State of Oklahoma has, as is fitting, a new idea. It is the plan to form "acre clubs" among the farmers all over the State. Twelve or fifteen farmers of a community are to form the club in that neighborhood. Each farmer agrees to plant a single acre for a certain crop, to give it the best care he can, and keep an exact account of his expenses and labor with reference to that acre, together with the growth and development of the crop and of other matters necessary to make the experiment as instructive as possible.

After the harvest the club is to hear in turn the results of all these acres, and thorough discussion is to give to every member of the club the full experience of all the other members with regard to their acres. So far as possible, each acre is to be planted for a different crop, so as to bring in the largest amount of information.

The idea is so admirable that it is a shame to confine it to agriculture; why not apply it also to things of the spirit?

Why, for instance, should not a dozen Christians band themselves together, each

agreeing to cultivate some little corner of the great "field which is the world," and report to the whole club from time to time just how they are getting along and all that they have learned?

One will take a Sunday-school class. One will take a church committee. One will take an old ladies' home. One will take a discouraged mother. One will take a "tough" young man. One will try personal evangelistic work. One will undertake Christian correspondence. One will see what can be done by lending good books. One will use a consecrated talent for music.

And each will "occupy" his acre,—will fill it full, that is, of earnest planning and ardent toil. The one will learn from the other, and all will learn from God. His rain and His sunshine will help them with their acres, and will accomplish far more than all their hoes and ploughs. And after the harvest they will meet for such a jubilee as their lives have never known before.

Acre clubs! Come to think of it, that is what all churches and all prayer meetings should be.

IT IS IN THE AIR.

NOT long ago the wireless operator of the Panama railroad steamer Advance, while off the coast of New Jersey, received the following message: "Magazine of the battleship Louisiana exploded off Rio. All on board lost." After a short time another message was picked up, correcting the first by saying that the boilers and not the magazine had exploded. It was not till the Advance reached New York that its passengers discovered that the messages were merely jokes. Some "smart" amateur had sent out the messages from his private experiment station, and was chuckling to himself over the dismay he was causing.

This ought to be stopped. Doubtless it will be stopped some day by the national government, if there is no other way to reach the nuisance. It is too easy to set up wireless telegraph stations. These private experimenters are getting in the way of the operators that have actual messages to send. Their electrical impulses make hash of the messages that have a right to the air because they are real messages.

Of course it will go hard with men to learn that the air is not open to them all

around the earth, and yet it must not be free to them. No man is permitted to run over another's land, or to fire a bullet over it, either; no more will he be permitted to fire electrical darts through the air that does not belong to him.

All of which has set me to thinking about a different sort of wireless telegraphy—a sort that is as old as the other is new, and as familiar as the other is strange.

"It is in the air," we say of an idea or a belief or an opinion which has taken men's fancy and captured men's minds. Perhaps it is an unfavorable judgment concerning some one. Perhaps it is a sense of coming disaster in the business world. Perhaps it is an eagerness for a political change. "It is in the air," we say of any of these matters, thinking that this is a sufficient explanation of it.

No, this is not a sufficient explanation of it. We ought to find out how it got into the air. Did it originate from some trifler's wireless telegraph station? Was it born as an irresponsible joke or a baseless sarcasm or sneer? Is it empty and unsubstantial as the air in which it is?

Let an opinion be ever so much "in the air," it has no right to a place in our heads or our hearts unless it is also in truth and in love.

CHURCH INVALIDS' ROOMS.

A WELL-APPOINTED modern church, especially one that happens to be situated in a town that is a health resort, is quite likely to boast an invalids' room.

This room is placed near the pulpit, so that the occupants can hear easily. It is set a little above the pulpit, so that the invalids will not be stared at by the congregation. The room has little windows in it, through which the invalids may look out and see the congregation and the preacher. In these comfortable apartments are rocking-chairs, and reclining-chairs, and couches. Of course there are no drafts. Here the sick folks may come or be carried, and here, well wrapped up, they can hear the singing and the prayers and the sermon, and, while still virtually in a sick-room, can go to church.

That is very well for the invalids, and no one should be anything but glad over it. But what is to be said about the arrangement if one is not sick? Certainly that it would be a great absurdity.

Nevertheless, where is there a church, though a thousand miles from a health re-

sort, and though every member of the congregation is in sound and flourishing health, but boasts an invalids' room? Nay, some of these churches are nothing but invalids' rooms, from the front door to the pulpit, and including the vestry in the rear.

The people that occupy these invalids' rooms are sensitive Christians that must be protected from all kinds of spiritual drafts. They are weak Christians, too timid or too retiring or too lazy to do any work. Their idea of "service" is going to church—and listening. They seem to sit in pews, these church invalids, but the angels, who see things as they are, know that they are really lying on couches, every one of them, each covered with a soft little afghan.

But what a pleasure it would be to open all the windows in such a church, and fill it full of drafts, and fling around a whip of small cords that would give the invalids some salutary exercise! Alas! I am not likely to have the privilege, for no one is admitted to such invalids' rooms but the doctor and the nurse.

BODY UNDER GARMENTS.

FOR nearly twenty years Frederic, Lord Leighton, was president of the British Royal Academy. He won this crowning honor by the classic beauty of his paintings and sculpture and by their amazing finish and accuracy. Lord Leighton was a painter of power and insight, but he was also a superb master of the details of his art. In this he was a model for all of us, even though we have nothing of his genius.

Here is the way he made his wonderful pictures.

First he sketched his idea carefully on brown paper with black and white chalk.

Then he posed the nude model precisely in the position the painting was to show, draped the model, and made another careful sketch.

Then a third sketch was made, this time in colors to get the color scheme.

Then from these sketches the nude figure was accurately and painstakingly painted upon the canvas that was to contain the finished picture. This was in monochrome.

Then, using his brown paper sketch which he had first prepared, Leighton arranged the draperies that were to cover the figure in the painting—those wonderful draperies for which Leighton was so famous, placing them carefully in position, fold upon fold, and carefully painting them over the nude figure upon the canvas, still using the monochrome.

Then, over this monochrome, Leighton placed the exquisite colors that made his paintings dreams of beauty.

The artist's canvasses were usually crowded with figures, and for every one of them the president of the Royal Academy went through the same laborious course of study. Indeed, for many of his figures he even made clay models, to study the effect of foreshortening and for other purposes. It is no wonder that his figures stand out from the canvas full and rounded as if the living flesh and blood were beneath. The body *was* beneath every portion of the intricate garment folds.

Oh, that is the way I want to do my work in the world!

There are some men whose utterances have solidity and substance. When they speak, every word carries weight. Their decisions have results. Their opinions move men. Their sentences are quoted and influence events.

Other men may use ten times as many words, but their words seem to burst like bubbles. They are empty and ineffectual. Their sentiments go out into the air as fruitless as it is.

The cause of the difference between the two is this. The first man speaks as Leighton painted. He forms his opinions by study. He has looked on both sides of every question upon which he gives a judgment. He can give a reason for the faith that is in him—nay, twenty reasons, and all of them good ones.

The second man has done nothing of all this. His words express his feelings of the moment, and they change as his feelings change. Men have learned this with regard to him, and estimate him accordingly.

There is only one way to give body to words, and that is to paint the body in back of them by thorough information and long meditation. Such words are events.

STAND UP TO YOUR TASK.

POSTMASTER GENERAL MEYER believes that it is a bad plan to sit down while at work, even if one is engaged in what is known as a sedentary occupation. He has had a desk brought all the way from Massachusetts to the Capitol, a desk which he used in former years when speaker of the Massachusetts House of Representatives. It is a desk so tall that he can stand up at it and do his work. He is sure that by this means he gets a larger amount of work done in the course of the day.

There is still to be seen in the famous tower room in the "Wayside" at Concord, Mass.,—the house now occupied by "Margaret Sidney," Mrs. Lothrop—the standing desk made by himself at which Hawthorne used to write his great romances and charming sketches. This wonderful artist in words seems to have held to the opinion of our Postmaster General.

There was an English judge—I do not remember his name—who had the curious habit of always placing his ink-well six feet away from his desk. Every time, therefore, that he needed a penful of ink

he was obliged to walk that distance to get it. This was the only exercise he took, and it sufficed to bring him to a sound old age.

Stand up to your task! There is warrant for the idea in our popular slang, for "to stand up to" a man or an undertaking is to attack it (or him) with vigor and perseverance, like a man.

There is a sitting-down habit of mind as well as of body. It means a relaxing of the mental fibre, a letting up of resolution, a weakening of spiritual force. No one can work at his best under such conditions. To work at one's best one must be alert in every nerve and muscle and brain corrugation. The red blood must course along the veins and arteries in a jubilant stream. The shoulders of the soul must be firm and erect as well as the shoulders of the body. The backbone must be well poised—the spiritual backbone as well as the backbone of bone. If a little standing up to my desk will help me into that spiritual and mental attitude, I will prop up my desk on dry-goods boxes this very day.

MOVE OUT.

FOR three years somebody with a commendable amount of patience has investigated the connection in Paris between consumption and places. The French capital, though its population is only a little more than a million souls, sees every year the death from "the white plague" of 9,500. That is a fearful record. There must be a reason for it.

There is. The reason is the tenement.

The poor people of Paris are housed in immense blocks, each swarming with life, and each reeking with the seeds of death. These tenements are built around narrow courts, and many of the rooms get very little light or air. Now during 1906 no fewer than 7,807 deaths from consumption occurred in houses where before there had been deaths from consumption. During 1905 the figures were 7,829—almost exactly the same. One-third of the deaths from consumption in Paris are traced continually to 5,263 houses—the same 5,263 houses every year. The houses that show the most deaths from consumption in one year show it in the other years also.

There is one group of 281 houses in which 109 people died from consumption during 1905, and 114 during 1906. And these death areas are all the time reaching out, widening into other houses.

The remedy is obvious. Tear down and burn up the worst houses. Thoroughly cleanse the rest, and let in the air and the light. This—though only to a slight extent as yet—is what Paris is doing.

The lesson is a spiritual one also. There are plague spots in my life. There are scenes in which I have met temptation. There are circumstances under which I have fallen a prey to the evil one. There a disease of the soul has come upon me that is far more terrible than any disease of the body.

Shall I go on living in those scenes, exposed to the same temptations?

No! no! and again, no!

Let me move out. Let me get into the clean sunshine and the fresh, pure air. Let me flee from the germ-infected region. Let me surround myself with circumstances that will carry no reminder of temptation.

For to the soul a baneful acquaintance, or a vile picture, or a slimy book, or even the smell of a liquor, or the sound of a certain piece of music, may be a house of death more certainly fatal than any consumption-plagued house in Paris.

NO ONE BELIEVED HIM.

A LONDON pawnbroker made a wager with a friend not long ago. He asserted that he could put in his window a diamond worth \$500 (one hundred guineas), and mark it for sale at 56 cents (two shillings three pence), and that no one would buy it at that price, though he waited five days. The experiment was made, and the pawnbroker won. The diamond was exposed for sale, thus absurdly ticketed, and by the end of the five days it remained unsold.

A good illustration, that, of the common dependence upon high prices and show. Let a man or a thing be rated extravagantly, by themselves or others, and in most cases the world will accept them at the inflated valuation. Let them be set forth as of little worth, and they will be little esteemed.

How I wish I had been in London during those five days, and had chanced to look into that pawnbroker's window! And yet why do I think that I should have had so much more discernment than others? Probably I also should have glanced carelessly at the stone, muttered "Paste!" and passed on my way.

(It is thus with the most precious things of life. They are all given away, or sold at a price ridiculously below their real value. Thus it is with love, and friendship. Thus it is with fresh air and sunshine and birds' songs. Thus it is with flowers and sunsets and all the beauty of the natural world. Thus it is with the divine pardon and comfort and helpfulness. Thus it is with heaven. Thus it is with Jesus Christ.

(Ah, because these are given away, "without money and without price," shall I be so foolish as to spend my time and strength and money upon the costly toys of the transient world?

ACCOMMODATING.

GRUNIGEN, a village near Zurich, Germany, boasts of a newspaper which is certainly unique. It is named the *Wochenblatt*, and its enterprising editor and proprietor is Herr J. Wirz.

Now Grunigen has only fifteen hundred inhabitants. Herr Wirz realized, therefore, that he and his paper would starve together if he did not succeed in obtaining as subscribers practically all the people within reach. So he built up a literary product designed to please. He has four pages. Two of them are given up to the liberal party of Germany, and two to the conservatives. One week the editor writes for the first side, and the second his editorials are on the second side. In each issue he demolishes his arguments of the preceding number. He condemns himself unsparingly. He heaps ridicule and sarcasm upon himself with no fear of a duel. He conducts a desperate war with himself, and his readers look on, delighted. His happy artifice brings him a comfortable reward.

I laughed when I read the story; for, after all, Herr Wirz is not unique, but is one of a large and flourishing class of

agreeable toilers. You find them in thousands of editorial chairs. Many of them are professors, many are politicians, some are ministers of the gospel. They are found in all occupations and in all grades of society.

What they want is a living, not a personality. They readily sink their manhood in any scheme that ends in a bank account. If they have opinions, they will not utter them. If they learn of evils, they will not proclaim them. They will turn no client from their office. They will debate on either side, accept any commission, enter any alliance. They know only one thing, that the world, as they say, owes them a living. They hold to only one allegiance, and that is their loyalty to themselves. The *Wochenblatt* comedy is played in every town.

But the comedy becomes a tragedy ere long. "Woe unto you when all men speak well of you!" Woe unto you when all men subscribe for your paper or join your church or vote your ticket. You have passed, by that token, the limit of true manhood. One of the first duties of a man is to take sides. He who is not for Christ is against Him. If all men speak well of you now, a time is coming when no word can be spoken well of you, on earth or in heaven.

“NO RIGHT TO HIMSELF.”

I HAVE just come across a fine sentence, written by Charles Russell Lowell, a nephew of the poet Lowell. He was a young soldier in the Civil War, and he died fighting gallantly for his country. The sentence I refer to is taken from one of his letters. It is this:

“I feel every day, more and more, that a man has no right to himself at all.”

Of course you are familiar with the thought. It is only another way of saying that he who would find his life must lose it. But even the Saviour's words come to us sometimes with new force when the thought is put in a different fashion from that to which we have grown so accustomed.

“A man has no right to himself!”

Paul knew that. “Ye are not your own,” he declared. “Ye are bought with a price.”

All great souls have known it, and in the knowledge have become great and have done great deeds.

For it is when a man thinks that he is

his own, that his life and his possessions belong to him, that he can spend his time as he likes and his money as he pleases, and use his talents according to his own will—it is then that a man is small, and grows smaller every day. That thought turns inward. It has one miserable centre, and all gravitation is toward that centre. It is a condensing thought, a dwarfing thought.

But this other idea, that I am not my own, that my goods are not my own, nor my time, nor my talents, that they belong to the next man that needs me, to the next cause that seeks me, to the whole wide world and all that is therein—this idea is broadening, it radiates, it enjoys an ever-extending circumference. The world is the sphere of that thought, and so is the universe. It is enough, just by itself, to transform a dwarf into a giant.

“A man has no right to himself at all.” No right as against God’s desire for him. No right as against man’s need of him. No right—ah, it amounts to this in the end!—no right as against his imperial destiny that God is eagerly reaching out for him to take. For every man is a king, and a king has no right to himself. He is his kingdom’s.

UP CLOSE TO YOUR WORK.

ONCE there was a man that made a foolish wager. All wagers are foolish, for that matter, but this was particularly foolish.

He bet that he could tie a brick to two miles of cord, and, pulling on the further end of the cord, move the brick. He thought he was sure of winning.

The experiment was made outside the city of Chichester, England. A brick weighing about seven pounds was used. Two miles of stout cord were tied to it, and the man pulled. And he could not budge the brick.

Neither could you, for the friction of the two miles of cord upon the level road increased the seven pounds of the brick, as has been roughly estimated, to a dead weight of about one ton!

The lesson I get from this experiment in physics applies to all my work. It is this: do not work at long range! Get up close to whatever you are doing. It is a weight that you must lift. Very well: put your two hands directly under it, and

lift! Do not tie a rope to it and go off a mile or two and pull.

There are all sorts of long-distance ways of working.

Some people must have committees appointed for everything, and put the cord of two or three business meetings, and a set of resolutions, and an election, and a chairman, and committee meetings, and preliminary reports, and instructions, and a second report, and a lot besides, between themselves and their brick.

Some people even go further, and really cannot see their way to get anything done without forming a society for the purpose.

Others cannot undertake any matter, however simple, but they must first study it up at great length in all the libraries to which they have access.

Still others cannot go to their tasks till they have consulted a dozen people about them, and put two miles of more or less expert advice between themselves and their brick.

And others before doing anything must write out a plan for doing it and a set of elaborate rules, stretching two miles of self-manufactured red tape between themselves and their brick.

Give me the men that have no use for such ingenious subterfuges for avoiding work! Give me the men that, when they

see a thing needs to be done, go and do it! Is it a brick to be got out of the way or built into a wall? Very well. Here are two hands. Presto! The deed is done. And now, what next?

UNDER COVER.

OUT California way there is a certain melon-grower that may be a Yankee or may not be, but he has found a Yankee way of doing things. He has six acres of melons, and of this great expanse of possible lusciousness he has covered 876 hills with canopies.

These canopies are made of white muslin, and each is about as large as a man's handkerchief. The canopies are stretched over bent wires, which are crossed like the centre arches in croquet. Each canopy is sowed to the ends of the wires, and the wires are then stuck into the ground so as to stretch the muslin taut and keep the wind from blowing it away. The protectors cost about eight cents apiece.

Under the canopies the young plants grow, snugly shielded from the wind and the frost, while the sun's rays are imprisoned much as in a hot-bed. At the time when the article was written from which I gained my information, the protected plants were far ahead of their unprotected brothers and sisters, and the experiment

seemed likely to result in melons about three weeks in advance of all competitors. That, in this impatient age, is worth a small fortune to their enterprising owner.

And now, quite apart from thoughts of money gain, is there not much advantage in the use of canopies in all our planning and working?

Some of us, I think, thrust the seeds of our designs into cold ground and expose the tender shoots to all the blasts of heaven. We have no mercy upon these babes of our heart and brain. We tell our plan to the first man we meet, or we present it at the first meeting that we attend after forming the plan. It gets "nipped in the bud," as we say. More truly, usually, it never gets into the bud at all, but gets nipped in the seed.

Let us quietly adopt the canopy notion. When we get an idea, let us cherish it in secret for a while. Let us "mull over it." Let us communicate it, if to any, then to sympathetic souls. Let us stretch above it a cover of meditation and prayer. Let us fashion for it a little sunshine-room where it may enjoy to the full the rays of a fructifying sun. Let us not expose it to the criticism of the world till it is well formed, till its roots are established in our mind, till it is ready for the buffettings that are sure to try its strength to

the utmost at the same time that they develop new strength.

If this is the way to raise good melons and to raise them swiftly, I am sure that it is also the way to raise good plans that will grow and blossom and bear fruit.

PHYSIOGNOMICAL HAIR-CUTTING.

IN the narrow street back of my office—it is more an alley than a street—is an Italian barber-shop. Five or six enterprising sons of Italy are always smilingly on hand in the sub-sidewalk room; and they do good work, for I have tried them.

But what pleases me especially is the sign outside. It is a very neat sign, and it reads, "Physiognomical Hair-Cutting."

I suppose that means hair-cutting to fit the face. Not the same kind of hair-cutting for the long-faced man and the round-faced man. A gloomy sort of hair-cut for the solemn-faced man. A cheery sort of hair-cut for the joker, with a mustache, if he has one, comically turned up at the corners. A professional type of hair-cut. A ministerial variety. A special kind for musicians and artists. Why, a perfect vista of possibilities opens up at the very mention of "physiognomical hair-cutting."

How well my physiognomical barbers do it I cannot tell you. I should need to take my position outside their shop and watch their product for a day or two.

Very likely each customer has his own preferred style of hair-cut, and insists upon it, oblivious of the demands of Art. *I* have, and do.

But, just the same, their aim is high. They have fixed their mark. They will be physiognomical hair-cutters, and not the common sort. They will get out of the beaten track. They will develop a specialty. They will become artists in very truth.

*(*And that is what succeeds in any calling—not just common hair-cutting, but physiognomical hair-cutting. Not humdrum school-teaching, but the kind that Horace Mann did. Not ordinary newspaper copy, but the sort that Horace Greeley turned out. It is the little touches that other folks don't think of. It is the extra polish that others do not achieve. It is the pushing of pens and ploughs and yard-sticks and rolling-pins and flat-irons and scissors to higher than the usual ends, to ends that come as close to art as possible—it is this that ensures success.

If it is ever my lot to be a barber, I shall be a professor of comparative physiognomy.

THE CAT IN THE GARDEN.

I HAVE been putting in my vegetable seeds. The process always develops unexpected difficulties, in my case at least, but this year the difficulty was one of large dimensions. It was our cat.

We have had cats for years. We had this cat last year. But this is the first time the particular difficulty to which I refer has occurred.

Our cat suddenly has come to fancy clawing the earth, and walking around in it, and sitting down on it. Of course he has done that before. All cats like to do it. But this year it has become a passion.

I will spade up a portion of the garden, break up the soil into fine particles, rake it into a smooth bed, make my trenches and plant my seeds, covering them nicely over and firming the ground over them, and will go away, leaving the promising blank surface happily to the sun and the showers.

And, alas, to the cat!

I will come back the next day only to find that bed a pandemonium, scratched into great holes, and all the work to do

over again, to say nothing of the loss of the seeds.

I tried stretching mosquito-netting over the drills. The cat got on the mosquito-netting and drove it deep into the soil in a series of humps and holes. That cat is a heavy animal. Also, he is not easily balked.

I tried covering the beds with brush. The cat took the brush as a challenge. Was some foe concealed underneath? He found out.

Then I tried driving posts at each corner of the bed and winding string around the whole, yards upon yards of it, and then over the top, back and forth, till I had made an enclosure of string. I knew, of course, that the cat could get through that frail barrier, but I hoped he would take the hint. Not he.

This morning I was at work in the garden when I saw him push his way into that string enclosure and make havoc in my best bed, where neat rows of beets and parsnips were already pushing their green exploring fingers through the soil.

This was my chance to teach that cat a lesson, and I sprung after him. With a leap that left more havoc behind him, he fled, and I pursued. Across the yard and into the cellar. Through the cellar and up stairs into the kitchen. Through the kit-

chen and into the summer kitchen. There I had him, for the outside door was shut.

I was not angry with the cat. He is a fine fellow. He did not know he was doing wrong; how could he? And why should he be punished for doing what he did not know to be wrong?

And yet here was a practical problem: how, unless he was punished, could he know that it was wrong to go under string enclosures and trample on garden-beds? Cat intelligence is very good in its way, but I might talk all day to that cat, and explain with care the difference between ground that is soft and ground that is hard, and ground that has string around it and ground that has not, and at the end of the day that cat would have been no atom the wiser. How could I teach him a lesson? Obviously, in no other way than by punishing him. So I did it.

He was not hurt, except in his feelings. I simply gave him a few very emphatic pats that he could not mistake for caresses. Then I took him into the garden and held him, violently kicking, while I repaired the damage as best I could. Then I let him go and he flew into hiding, evidently feeling his disgrace.

And as I went on with my work in the garden I wondered to myself whether God

is not sometimes driven to similar ways of teaching us stupid creatures, whose intelligence is so far below His own that it must be a matter of extreme difficulty, often, to get into our minds at all what must be to Him the simplest of truths. We run under the strings, which are the laws of the universe, and we must be taught not to; and often suffering is the only way. I will remember this the next time I have a headache or a heartache.

CHURCH BEES.

A LONDON paper gives an interesting account of a swarm of bees that for more than twenty years has had possession of the roof of the nave of Ifidel Parish Church. Recently they have abused their privileges. At one time hundreds of them were found in the church, their bodies sprawled all over the floor. They have annoyed the vicar in the pulpit. They have stung a member of the choir. Their room came to be decidedly better than their company.

Therefore some one that understood how to handle bees was called in. He studied the situation, mounted the roof, made a hole in it, and bagged the entire colony of honey-makers. Off they went to find more suitable quarters in a hive, and now that church is at peace.

The bee is a fine insect. For centuries it has received the praise of moralists for its industry and its commendable social qualities. But, in spite of this, it is no model for the Christian, and no fit member of a church. That is because the primary Christian quality is not industry, ad-

mirable as that is, but love; and in love the bee is sadly wanting. When smitten on the one cheek it does not turn the other; it turns its sting, and with efficiency. It is hot-headed. It is a nuisance in a crowd.

And so I do not like church bees. They are busy, but they are busybodies. They are all the time doing things, but they do some things that would better be left undone. Their zeal outruns their discretion. Their tongues are as sharp as the bee's sting, and quite as ready, on no provocation worth mentioning. Their unkind remarks, their sarcasms, their innuendoes, their faultfinding, their officiousness, tear down faster than their labor, however constant, can possibly build up. They are bees, but their honey is bitter.

We want church workers, but not bees. The horse is as industrious as the bee, and it has no sting. The cow is as good a plodder as the bee, and its temper is pleasant, usually. And if I want sweetness in a church I can get it without bees—by raising sugar-cane, for instance.

The Mormons chose a beehive for their symbol. They may keep it.

HANDICAPPING ONE'S SELF.

HOUDINI is a wonderful man. He seems to be able to wriggle out of any pair of handcuffs that ever were snapped on, to make his way out of any prison however stout the doors, and to force an exit from any box into which he may be nailed or chained or bolted.

One of his latest exploits was the following: After appropriate advertisements—for Houdini is not in this business for the fun of it—the wizard stood one day on Harvard Bridge, connecting Boston and Cambridge, while a tremendous crowd watched him. He placed his hands behind his back and allowed them to be handcuffed together. An iron yoke was set around his neck and a chain was run from it to the handcuffs, the chain also being fastened to clasps which encircled his arms just below the shoulder. Thus weighted with sixteen pounds of iron and steel, Houdini leaped from the bridge into the swift current of Charles River, twenty-six feet below.

In less than a minute the remarkable man thrust his hand above the green water

and held aloft the opened handcuffs! Houdini says it was forty seconds, and declares that he can time himself closer than any split-second watch. Whatever the time, it was a marvellous feat.

I should like to be able to do that—and then not do it! On the river of life I have seen the thing done many a time—at least the first part of it, the putting on the handcuffs. The other part, the twisting out of the handcuffs while wrestling with the stream, I have seen very seldom indeed.

Handcuffed? How?

Why, by bad habits, by drinking, by gambling, by licentiousness, by sloth, by carelessness, by conceit, by lying, by dishonesty, by infidelity. Each of these is a pair of handcuffs with which I have seen many a young fellow allow his hands to be locked behind his back while he leaped into the river of life. Then I have seen him flounder awhile. Then I have heard him raise one despairing cry to heaven. Then he has sunk, to rise no more.

Oh, leave that sort of thing to Houdini and the Charles River! Or, if you must try it, try Houdini's kind of handcuffs. You will be safer with those than with any of the handcuffs I have named.

WHAT A SOLDIER CARRIES.

I AM much interested in a list that lies before me giving the weights that the different nations of Europe place upon their soldiers when they are on the march. French soldiers must carry 57.48 pounds, German soldiers 64.71 pounds, Italian soldiers 64.10 pounds, Russian soldiers 64.25 pounds, Austrian soldiers 58.55 pounds, and so on. The average weight is 62.41 pounds.

This great burden includes arms, cooking utensils, intrenching tools, and other material necessary for his trade. The American soldier marches much lighter, because he is usually free from the burden of intrenching tools and cooking utensils, with the exception of his kit.

Governments are all the time trying to lighten this load, and the increasing complexity of war is all the time adding to it. Doubtless it will always be necessary for soldiers to go thus handicapped—that is, till the happy day when soldiers and armies will be memories of the past.

But, after all, the soldier's burden is

part of the soldier's efficiency. He cannot move so easily or rapidly, but he moves to far more purpose. Indeed, without his burden he would not move far at all, no matter how swift he might become in its absence.

(And it is just that way with us soldiers in the long marches and hard-fought campaigns of life. We are heavily weighted. Sometimes we stumble and sink, exhausted by the weary road. It seems cruel to pile all that load upon us. But the burden is part of our efficiency. It is food to us, or it is weapon to us, or it is safety to us. Sometimes we cannot quite understand the purpose of all our burden, but the great Captain knows, and somewhere in the battle we shall have need for every pound of it, every ounce.

So let us square our shoulders to the load and—forward march !

GETTING USED TO POISONS.

FOR a long time the wise men have known that certain poisons harden the body against themselves. The first time a boy smokes a cigar, for instance, the poison in the tobacco makes him deathly sick, but after a while he can puff away proudly, with no unpleasant effects—to himself, whatever we may say of the poor people that must be in the same room with him. Of course the poison continues to do its deadly work just the same, but the boy or the man does not realize it.

Alcohol is similar. An "old soaker" requires more and stronger liquor to make him drunk than a beginner on the downward way, though all the time the alcohol is killing him. Arsenic, morphine, cocaine, and many other poisons act in a similar manner.

But recently it has been definitely proved that there are poisons that act in just the opposite way. Instead of their apparent effects becoming less with each successive dose, they become greater. Such a poison has been obtained from the sea-anemone.

Give a dog a very small dose of it, and he will be sick for a few days, and will then recover. Then give him a dose only one-twentieth of what you gave him before, and he will be dangerously sick at once. The poison has made the dog more sensitive to itself.

As I read of this I asked myself, "To what class of poisons does sin belong?"

The answer is, of course, "To the first class." A sin that would terrify a young boy and would be impossible for his pure soul becomes, to the man hardened in crime, nothing but a matter of course.

And then I asked myself, "To which class of poisons does temptation belong?"

The answer is, of course, "To the second class." Yield to a temptation, and it becomes easier to yield to it the next time. Only a whiff of the odor of brandy is enough to set a toper's brain on fire.

And with both, of course, the only safe way is to avoid the first dose of the poison. The nicotine kind or the sea-anemone kind—both are deadly in their time, and the fact that one is slow about it and the other rapid, that one works under cover and the other in the open, makes little difference to me. If I am offered my choice of a stiletto or a bludgeon, I will take—neither.

A CERTAIN USE FOR LITERATURE.

A WELL-KNOWN dealer in old books and periodicals was telling me this week of a queer order he once received. The customer wanted twelve bundles of old magazines, twelve numbers in each bundle. The magazines were to be the same all the way through, and each bundle was to contain the same twelve numbers as all the others. It made no difference what the magazine might be, or the numbers, provided all the bundles were exactly alike.

The secret of the strange order was this. The purchaser intended to try certain sorts of cartridges,—he was a dealer in them,—and he wanted to measure their penetrating power. Therefore he intended to set up these bundles of magazines and fire away at them. The resistance would be the same in every case, since the number of pages would be the same and the paper would be of precisely the same thickness and quality. By noting, therefore, how many pages were punctured by each shot

he would have an index of the power of each cartridge. It was an ingenious method.

I am especially interested in it because it suggests an altogether new use for literature. Indeed, there are some magazines, and many books, for which this would be the most appropriate use. I know nothing that can be done with them better than this, to tie them up in bundles and pepper them with bullets. Some of us have for years been firing words at them and charges of evil, but we should enjoy having a shot at them with actual powder and ball. It would not be an *auto da fé*, but it would be a polite and wholly justified modern substitute for that custom of the olden days.

CATCH YOUR BOLTS.

SOME workmen were repairing the Boston Elevated Railway. One of them took a red-hot bolt in his pincers and threw it up to another workman, who was to place it in the hole drilled for it. The second workman failed to catch it, and it fell to the street below. There it struck a truck-load of twenty bales of cotton, a thousand dollars' worth, that was passing at the moment. The cotton instantly took fire, but the driver knew nothing of it. The flames had made considerable headway when the cries of the onlookers informed the driver of what was going on. He had only enough time to leap out of the way of the flames and save his horse. The Boston fire department was summoned and put out the fire.

(This is a fair sample of what happens every time one of us workmen on the great edifice of human society misses a bolt that is thrown to him. They are many—these bolts—and they come thick and fast. They are red-hot, too, for they are duties that are in imperative need of getting done. If

they are not at once stuck into the proper hole, and the top at once flattened out by sturdy blows, they grow cool and useless. They cannot be put into the structure; or, if we go ahead and hammer them in, they are not tight and they may bring about disaster.

No, there is nothing for it but to catch the bolts on the fly. Let one fall, and some one gets hurt—or some *thing*, which, in the end, means some *one*. The streets are crowded. It may be a bale of cotton. It is quite as likely to be a mass of hair with a head underneath it. No one knows what will be hit when a worker misses a red-hot duty that comes flying at him.

There is only one safety for the workman or for the rest of us: *Catch them!*

HOLDING THE LANGUAGE.

A YOUNG professor was talking with me the other day and giving his experiences in the University of Berlin, from which he had just come. He had found considerable difficulty in learning German well enough to understand his teachers in the classroom; but he had been fortunate enough to get into a boarding-house where only German was spoken, so that his progress in the language was, in a sense, forced upon him.

He went to Germany with only college German, not at all sufficient for conversation; but in a few months he became able to speak and understand the language quite readily. He reserved Sunday for visiting his English-speaking friends, and upon that day alone he allowed himself to lapse again into his native tongue. He always found that on Monday he was unable to speak and understand German as well as before Sunday. By the next Saturday he would recover his knowledge, but the Sunday interval of English always caused some of it to slip away.

I spoke to the professor of Hamerton's

boy, who in early childhood, living in Scotland, understood Gaelic, but, being sent to the south of France, the lad picked up Provengal in three months so thoroughly that he not only forgot his Gaelic, but was absolutely unable to speak English, and could not talk with his father when he came on a visit. Later, removing to the north of France, the boy in a few weeks forgot all his Provengal and became able to speak nothing but French. Indeed, Hamerton contends that it is not possible for a person to speak perfectly more than one language at a time.

This consideration has set me to thinking about the language of heaven. For there is a language of heaven, spoken upon earth, quite distinct from any language of earth. It employs the words of earthly languages, but it is a different tongue, for the spirit is entirely different. It is to be heard sometimes in prayer meeting, but not in all prayer meetings. It is to be heard when aged saints hold converse with God in prayer. It is to be heard when two sincere and open Christians talk confidingly to each other out of their inmost hearts. When it is heard, it is perceived at once to be a new language, and a very beautiful one.

Is it possible to speak this language for part of the week, say on Sunday, and an

earth-language for the rest of the week? Not to perfection. If any one would speak it well, he must speak it all the time. He must allow it to drive out all other language. That is the preparation, and the only wise preparation, for speaking it in heaven.

SIX-O'CLOCK MEN.

THE people of Suffolk County, England, are in the habit of speaking of "six-o'clock folk." The expression is puzzling to those that are not to the manor born, and an explanation has to be obtained. The words are found to mean "upright folk," people that are straight up and down, as are the hands of a clock at six.

It is good to live in a community of six o'clock folk. They are dependable people. They are not one thing to-day and a different thing to-morrow. They can be trusted in the dark as well as in the light. The "straight" people are pleasant to live with as well as to look at.

But there is another possible meaning for "six-o'clock men." It may mean men that get up at six o'clock, early-rising men, men of energy. To be sure, six o'clock is not a particularly early hour for rising. I should call it quite late in my own practice. And yet, if a man gets up regularly at six winter and summer, he does fairly well, and he may be counted upon to keep the wolf from the door and make a de-

cent way in the world. That sort of folk is a good sort to live with.

And I think of still another possible interpretation of "six-o'clock men." Six o'clock is the half-way time. It is neither high noon nor midnight, but just half-way between. And six-o'clock people may be said to be those comfortable, mediocre men that are not geniuses, and they know it, nor dullards, and they know *that*, but simply good average people, sensible, plodding, contented, and efficient. And that kind is a good kind to live with.

Commend me, therefore, to six-o'clock men. They will not "strike twelve" even once in their lives, but they are a delightful set of people just the same.

A STRONG-BOX THAT WAS TOO STRONG.

LAST week a man in Boston, seventy-five years old, went to a safe-deposit vault to look up some business papers. He was a rich man, a director of a number of companies. While he was searching for the papers, a strong-box, weighing six hundred pounds, fell from its shelf above him and threw him to the floor. A doctor was called at once, but before he could get there the old gentleman had expired.

It is not often that wealth kills a man in this way, but in other ways it often happens. Many a man's fortune is placed in a strong-box over his head, and hangs there by an insecure fastening ready to fall upon him and crush him. Some men go about the world with the knowledge that this terrible possibility is impending. Most men that are threatened by it are entirely ignorant of it.

*(*Few men to whom their wealth is a peril are conscious that it is a peril. They have become hardened to the danger by degrees. When they began life, the strong-

box was very small and very light. If it fell, it would hardly harm a fly. But the box has grown with the passing of the years,—grown both in size and in weight,—till at last it has many times the weight of a man and can easily crush a man under its deadly mass.

How foolish men are to live in such hazard when they might so easily “stand from under”!

“So easily,” did I say? Ah, but suppose the soul has rooted itself right beneath that strong-box.

ITS HEART IN ITS SONG.

If it were on an authority less reliable than *Country Life*, I should not believe it, but that periodical is to be trusted. It says that the nightingale, when it sings, is wholly absorbed in the beautiful music it makes. No matter what happens around it, the bird sings on. The writer of the article referred to even believes that the bird sings in the dusk with its eyes shut, and gives as a reason for his belief the experiment he made of stealing within a few yards of where a nightingale was singing one night, and then silently striking a match. The bird, he declares, sang serenely on, without dropping a note.

Good for the sweet singer! That is the way to sing. Songs that are thus sung, whether by avian or by human poets, will always be heard.

And that is the way to do any piece of work, whether it is poetry or prose, a nightingale's song at twilight, or the digging of a ditch at noon. Become so interested in your task that nothing short of an earthquake will distract your attention

away from it. Throw your whole soul into it, and not merely the outer edge of your soul. Put your whole mind upon it, and not merely two or three convolutions of your brain. Get so deaf to the noises of men that you can do the work as well in a boiler-factory as in the centre of a thousand-acre farm. Pay no more heed to interruptions than a cannon-ball would. While you are at your task make yourself to all purposes alone in the world with it.

Men that can do that are masters of the situation. Men that cannot do it, but must have a thousand preliminaries of surroundings, equipment, and conditions before they can do any work, are at the mercy of every wind that blows. Their failure in this distracting world is certain and swift. The only victory for the laborer comes along the line of courageous independence.

HARMLESS DUELLING?

HERE is in Paris a club of queer fellows whose purpose is to promote what is called harmless duelling. It is considered a fine sport, and the members are very enthusiastic over it.

The persons that engage in this truly modern form of duelling use ice-cold pistols and frozen-wax bullets. They wear over their clothes a slight protection and on their heads a mask something like a diver's helmet. The wax bullets simply flatten out upon the person that is hit, and do no damage. The points of the game are made according to the places where the players are hit, the wounds being theoretically slight, or dangerous, or fatal, as the case may be—but only theoretically. A player may be technically dead, yet walk off and enjoy a good dinner.

Well, this sport may perhaps promote peace in a land where the duel still exists. It may prove a harmless vent for the duelling instinct. But I doubt it.

Rather it seems to me that the very opposite would be the case. Men that become expert at "killing" one another in fun will not be so likely to hesitate before

giving a challenge to a real duel when their anger is roused.

If a man has rheumatism from too much beef, it is not best to feed him veal, but vegetables. If a girl is stage-struck, it is not best to seek to win her from the theatre by one-man impersonations, but by games of tennis. If I wanted to cure a gambler, I should not ask him to play any card game, however innocent.

Wounding and killing are sins, when they are in earnest; they are unwise, to say the least, when they are only pretences. Never imitate an act in fun if you do not want to do the deed in earnest.

LIVING WATER.

THERE are in our West numbers of desert stretches like the famous Death Valley in Nevada. In making one's way across these dreary wastes one of the chief perils, or, at any rate, the chief discomfort, arises from thirst. Water is very scarce, and thirst under the burning sun comes to be maddening.

When the traveller is in such a condition, ready almost to barter his soul for a good drink of water, he is likely to come across some shallow pool filled with a sparkling liquid that is as clear and beautiful as if it were just distilled from the snows of Mt. Blanc. It is just what he has been looking for. It seems purity itself. He stoops down eagerly to drink his fill.

Well for him if at that moment some more experienced traveller is at hand to pull him back from the tempting draught. If he drinks of it, severe sickness and almost certain death will be his immediate fate. For that pool is heavily charged with arsenic.

But if, on the other hand, the traveller

finds a pool of foul-appearing water, water that is full of worms and bugs and snakes, most repulsive to the eye and forbidding to the taste, that water may be drunk with safety. Lie down flat upon the burning sands and fill yourself with it, not stopping to strain out the worms. For, since the insects and snakes are alive in it, it is healthful for you also.

And all of this is as true for Broadway, New York, and State Street, Chicago, as for Death Valley in Nevada. "Living water," the water of life, is not of necessity fair to the eye and pleasant to the taste. It may appear muddy and forbidding. The Christian activities, the way of life that is life indeed, may not seem half so attractive as the ways that take hold on death.

But watch a little. Stop and think. Is life here? Or is not this sparkle and clearness, this wonderful brightness and transparency, only conclusive proof of the absence of life and the presence of death? For life tramples and crowds and stains and muddies. Water that is used stirs up the bottom. Where there is life there is many a failure, many a sorrow, many a fear. But there is life there and what ministers to life, which is endlessly better than the most beautiful mask that death can wear.

WHEN YOU DON'T FEEL IT.

A MAN is very likely to think that when his body hurts him he is sick, and when it does not hurt him he is well. That is usually the case, and so he falls into the habit of considering pain as equivalent to disease.

On the contrary, pain is almost always only a symptom of disease. The pain may go and the disease may remain. Indeed, sometimes the disappearance of the pain points to a rapid advance in the progress of the disease.

Of course if the sick man is shown by other improvements, as in the condition of the vital organs, to be on the road to recovery, then the passing of the pain is a most hopeful sign; but sometimes the reverse is the case.

If the pain was caused by a cramp, then the end of the pain, however sudden, is a delight to every one concerned. This is true also of the cessation of pain when a foreign substance leaves a channel of the body which it has been clogging. But the end of the pain may be brought about by a hemorrhage, or by the bursting of a cavity that has been forming, or by a

sort of intoxication brought about by a retention in the body of poisonous matter. In such cases the sick man is really in a dangerous condition, but he feels suddenly quite well and happy.

How close together are the soul and the body! Every word I have written may be transferred, just as it stands, to the spiritual diseases under which men suffer. Uneasiness, grief, even despair over sin, are bad only because they point to the fact of sin. If the sin remains, and they disappear, the sinner is a thousand times worse off. He has lost the sentinel of his soul. He has poisoned it to death.

BUILDING TO THE LINE.

NEW ROCHELLE, N. Y., has in progress a lawsuit that interests me. A telephone company bought land from a certain Judge Levison, and then put up a building which extended clear to the boundary of the land, neglecting to provide any space for light and air. Judge Levison also owns the land next to the back of the building, which is vacant and which furnishes all the light and air for the rooms in which about fifty operators and clerks are at work. Now Judge Levison wants the telephone company to pay him an annual rental for the use of this light and air, and the company refuses, but offers instead a lump sum. To compel payment according to his terms, Judge Levison has built upon his land close to the windows of the telephone company a barricade of galvanized iron sheets held in place by long beams. This barricade shuts out the light and air, and the telephone company is using electric light and breathing its old air over again.

I am interested in this matter from the legal viewpoint, but also from its applica-

tion to our every-day living. For all of us, whether we own any real estate or not, are occupants of lands in the great estate of life. It is possible for us to build up to the limit, and to crowd our allotment of time quite full with the brick and mortar of worldly tasks. We may be so intent upon "making a living" that we may quite forget to live. We may quite leave out of our reckoning the light and air which are necessary if we are to do any worth-while work in the world very long.

This light and air are the higher things of life, the religion and music and art and social companionship which brighten life and sweeten it and fill it with vitality. We can get along without them after a fashion, but it is a half-hearted sort of living while we are in this world, and it makes no provision whatever for the life beyond this life.

And so when you plan your life-building leave abundant room for air and light. Do not crowd it to the line. For if you do, the stern laws of nature will be sure to raise an iron barricade, and the beautiful sky and the fresh breeze will be shut entirely out of your days.

LANGUAGE LEAVE.

SOME folks have been bringing to light the alleged fact that there are fewer officers in the army of the United States that speak a foreign language than in any other army in the world. This is natural when one considers the isolated position of our country. Other nations have foreign languages almost thrust upon them by contiguity.

One of the army captains has suggested that certain officers of high standing be given "a language leave of absence" for a year, and be sent to foreign countries to learn the tongues of those lands. Incidentally they could improve their military education in many other ways, but the language drill would be the main object.

It is not at once apparent to an outsider precisely what use an army officer would make of his extra language, if he had one. Of course, in the case of foreign wars, innumerable cases would come up in which it would be necessary to deal with the people of that land, and the intervention of interpreters would be troublesome and even dangerous. There are also foreign-born soldiers in our own army with

whom it might be an advantage to deal in their own languages at times. The reading of foreign books and periodicals might also be helpful to the officer. These are all the advantages I can think of.

But when I apply the thought to the army of King Emmanuel I have no question as to the utility of the idea. If there is a soldier in that army that does not know the language of the enemy whom he is fighting, I recommend for him an immediate "language leave of absence," to continue till the language is learned.

This is because no one can understand another man or help him till he knows his language. The language of a business man is quite different from the language of a college professor. The language of a hod-carrier is quite different from the language of a business man. They may all speak English, but they speak different languages just the same.

A common language is a great "point of contact," and the "point of contact" is the first necessity in all teaching and leading. Know how to talk with men, if you would influence them. Speak their language, if you would warm their hearts to you. And if you cannot do this, get a "language leave of absence," and go off to the Land of Loving Sympathy till you have learned it.

DEAD HANDS AT THE WHEEL.

AN automobile was whizzing along Ocean Parkway, New York City, one night not long ago. It was coming faster than twenty miles an hour, and a policeman that saw it knew it. He ordered the driver to slow down. No attention was paid to him.

It was a bicycle policeman, and at once he mounted his wheel, and set out after the reckless driver. He followed for many blocks and caught up as the machine had nearly reached Coney Island. "You are under arrest!" he shouted, but the driver did not answer. He had a companion who had brought the automobile to a stop. Not till then was it discovered that the driver was dead. From heart disease or some similar cause he had perished during that mad race.

I wonder that this does not happen oftener. And I wonder that it does not happen in other contrivances than automobiles. Indeed, I am not sure that it does not happen often when men know nothing of it, and perhaps do not learn anything of it.

For the modern world is rushing along so fast that many an institution, many a business firm, many a city, and even nation, is presided over by some one who holds the wheel, to be sure, but in hands that are dead. The pace has been too much for him. The nerve tension has killed him. Of course he still walks the earth, still goes to his office, he still holds his post, but his subordinates whisper that he has "lost his grip," that "his job is getting away from him," that "he is a back number."

There is danger in this to the rest of us also—to those that are sitting in the automobile back of the driver and to the pedestrians and other drivers along the road.

And there would seem to be only one remedy for the peril, and that is the sound old prescription, "*Festina lente*," "Make haste slowly." Let us write that motto on every automobile in the land.

THE PIGEON-HOLE SNARE.

YEARS ago some one you know—it was John Willis Baer—had in his office in our building a roll-top desk, with, on top of it, an extension full of pigeon-holes,—about forty of them. He took it into his head one day to do away with that desk and install in its place a broad table containing a few drawers. He asked me if I would not like the desk and the set of pigeon-holes on top, and I jumped at the chance. The desk had a few more compartments than the one I had been using, and there were about forty additional pigeon-holes. I was enraptured, as Mr. Baer knew I would be.

Since that time, I assure you, those pigeon-holes have been full. What has slipped into them no one but an editor can realize, because no one but an editor knows the vast variety of stuff that an editor has an opportunity to accumulate—is compelled to accumulate, almost. Indeed, an editor's life is a running fight against the on-rushing waves of written and printed paper. Letters, manuscripts,

papers, clippings, programmes, cards, proofs, memoranda, schedules, engravings, books—the flood is endless and insistent.

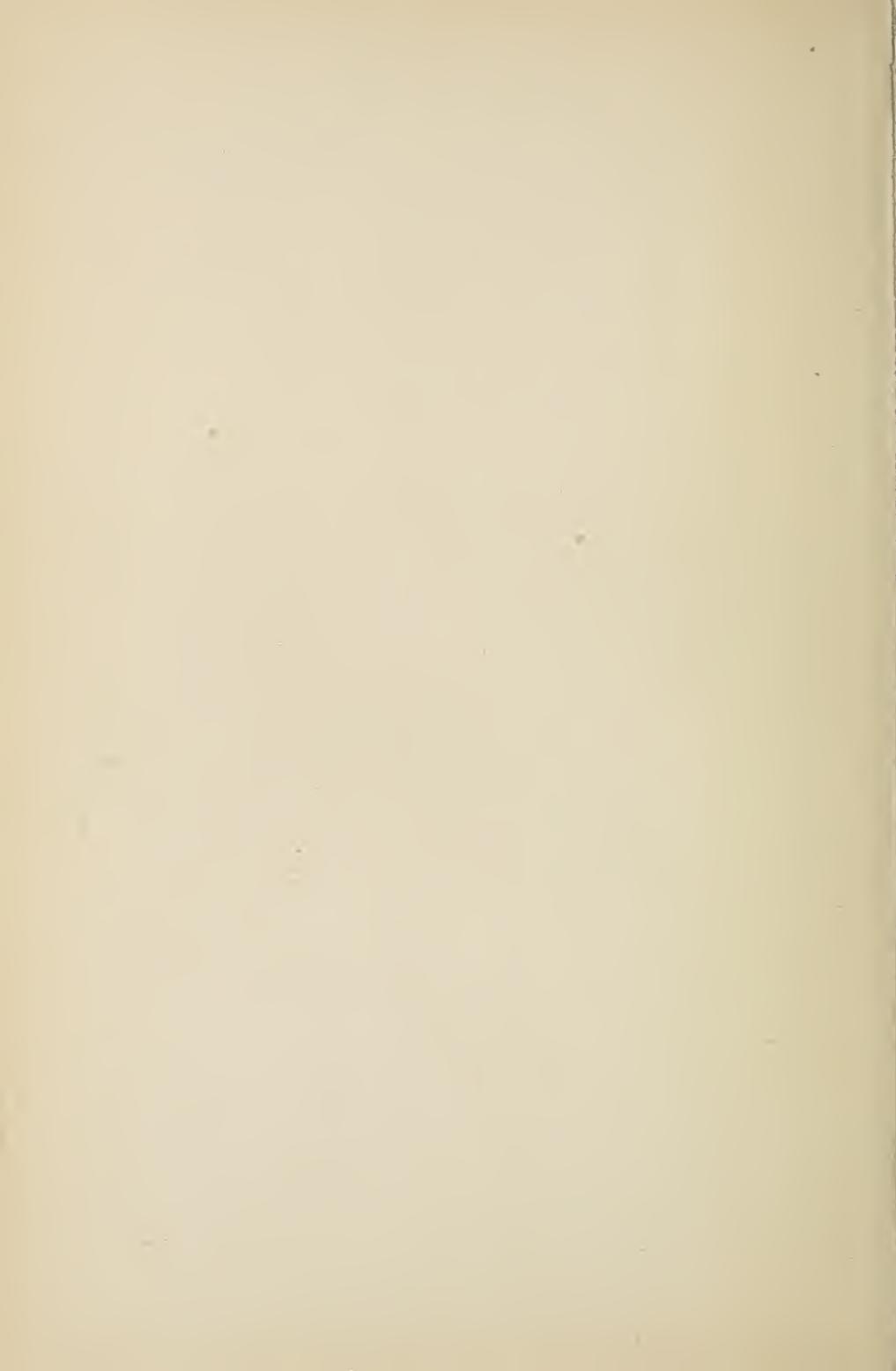
And pigeon-holes are so convenient for it! At the end of a long, hard day, with a desk still discouragingly littered with all sorts of abominable stuff, and with your stenographer, however willing, yet needing to go home, a happy thought takes possession of you—the pigeon-holes! You rapidly classify that mass. Unanswered letters pop into one pigeon-hole, unread manuscripts into another, memoranda of articles to write into a third, memoranda of articles to ask for into a fourth, and so on.

There is so much virtue in classification. The pigeon-holes absorb it all with so much alacrity. Your desk looks so clean and neat when you are through. You shut it up with satisfaction. And you open it the next morning with equal satisfaction. It is bare of all reproaching litter. No tasks awaiting you stare you in the face. Your mind accommodatingly passes by the fact that they are hidden away in the pigeon-holes. You enter upon the day with a light heart.

Once this pigeon-hole trick is learned it is easily repeated, till it soon grows into the pigeon-hole habit. The pigeon-holes

become crammed. Before long they will hold no more. Then it is the turn of the drawers, and they also are crowded. Then some fine day you wake up to the fact that the entire desk is full of postponed duties. In dismay you haul out the contents of a pigeon-hole. With growing dismay you examine it, and discover accusing dates upon the letters, and note the memoranda that should long ago have been attended to. Oh, the day of reckoning comes to every culprit of the pigeon-hole! Well for him if he grits his teeth, sets himself to clearing out those traps for sloth, and, after they are cleared out, resolutely shuts the roll-front down over them and throws the key out of the window!

That is what I intend to do. No more pigeon-holes for me! No more pigeon-holes in my desk—or, if I retain them, they shall be used not for tasks but for tools. And, more than that, no more pigeon-holes in my mind. For it is as easy to pigeon-hole a duty in the mind as a letter in the desk.



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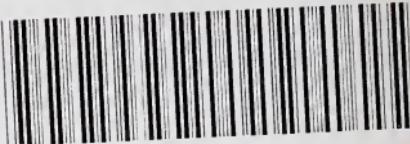
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